# Expressive English

BY JAMES C. FERNALD

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BY

JAMES C. FERNALD, L.H.D.

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# PREFACE

It is often held to be a sufficient description or definition of language to speak of it as "a medium of communication among intelligent beings." Language is that, indeed, and can never be less than that. But that is its lowest office. The hen calls her brood by a glad cluck to a fine bit of grain, or warns them by a terrifying note of the sweep of a hawk. But she has soon gone round the circle of ideas appropriate to her species, and the "medium of communication" has no place in the realm beyond, where for her and hers there is nothing to communicate. In all human beings, however, except the most degraded, there is a demand for communication of thought and feeling from one to another beyond what language as used by them can yet convey. With all mental advance the reach and range and delicacy of thought and feeling evermore outstrip the capacity of words to utter them. Language is under a constant impulsion to express ideas and emotions which are still beyond its power.

It is true that a decaying civilization may shrivel up, as it were, within a language, until it has no use for many words and phrases which were full of meaning to men of a nobler day. Such a language is in process of becoming a "dead language," as the Greek and Latin were becoming in Europe five centuries ago. Then, if the civilization is really alive, new languages will arise to express the thought and feeling of the new time, as the languages of modern Europe arose when hu-

manity awakened out of the night of the Middle Ages. How vast and wonderful were the needs for which these new languages had to provide expression! The invention of gunpowder, changing the whole art of war; the mariner's compass, opening sure ways across the pathless seas; the Copernican system of astronomy, giving the world and man for the first time their true place in the celestial spaces; the science of chemistry in place of the superstitions of alchemy; steam and gas, electricity and magnetism, the printing-press, the railroad, the steamship, the telegraph, the telephone, photography, wireless telegraphy, and now aviation:— all these, as arts and processes of modern life, have driven every vigorous modern language into a chase for words and phrases expressive enough to keep up with the crowding thought and imagery of the life actually about us, and beyond the direct communication of ascertained facts able to utter the constantly deepening and broadening visions and longings of the expanding human soul. To urge the expressiveness of language is to exalt the supremacy of thought. The language which is chiefly occupied with its own beauties is dying or dead; the language struggling to utter what is still beyond itself is alive, and none has more of this expansive vigor than our own.

English was a young, rude dialect when Latin was old and in ornamental decay; and the circumstances of the development of the new aspirant for power have never permitted it to evolve like a potato-sprout in a cellar, white, protracted, and delicate. By the exigencies of its existence it has been thrashed into sturdiness and vigor through centuries of conflict. Ever and evermore the concentrated energy of expression of human thought and feeling has been thrust upon and through

and through the language as the essential condition of its existence.

Foremost in colonization, at the front in industrial and commercial achievement, possessed by that impulse of actual doing in the concrete world which we call "practical," full of the enthusiasm of freedom for each individual life, and yet with that power of combination that can cement millions scattered far over land and sea into the cohesion of an empire or a world-republic, spoken by more human beings than any other tongue now or in ages past existing among men, the number of persons using it being credibly estimated at one hundred and fifty millions, the English language must beyond all others seek and attain fulness of expression. It presses close up to the foremost line of the world's advance, to be ever ready with a new word or phrase for every new thought, discovery, invention, or achievement. Voices from every range of human endeavor and every outreach of human intellect are calling the language on to express—express—express, ever more comprehensively and minutely all the shades and lines of thought and feeling, now plain and direct as a concrete highway, now toilsomely ascending as a mountain path, or yet again diversified with flower and shrub and rock and light and shade and sudden windings as a woodland road. Its ideal of utterance has come to be, not method, measure, melody, but meaning. "Fine writing," once the ideal of many young writers, is now disesteemed. The best speaking or writing of English will be done always by asking "What do I really mean to say?" or "What do I most deeply want to say?"—in other phrase, "What for my purpose can words now and here best express?"

The present author has long believed that much thor-

oughly correct English instruction fails by not keeping in view the higher possibilities of language, and by not awakening admiration, honor, and love for the English language as a great, beneficent, and living power. If students can be made to feel from the start that English is a grand, noble, and mighty means for the expression of thought, whether the simplest and plainest or the highest and most beautiful, they will feel a call to attain its mastery and a joy in bringing out its possibilities. Hence, in this work, the earnest endeavor has been to awaken interest, and even enthusiasm, for the language from the outset. For, what interests people they will learn, and learn readily. In a word, it has been believed that the rhetorical treatment of English speech may be made an attractive and an easy study, often fascinating as one follows its rich possibilities of expression.

The aim has been, as far as possible, to give principles rather than precepts. Comparatively little is learned by a series of commandments. The most excellent rules by themselves carry students but a little way. But a principle is living and of indefinite riches of application. Ideal is worth more than pattern. The precept settles one case; the principle is good for a thousand.

It has also been believed that the rhetorical use of English may be taught in English. The Greek masters of rhetoric so impressed their personality and their methods upon all students that the very Greek words they used have been maintained for centuries with a reverent fear that the contents would be lost if the receptacle were changed. Then the old schoolmen clung to the foreign phrases as making rhetoric an "art and mystery," which only the elect few could understand.

So our books still carry *aposiopesis, prosopopeia, synecdoche,* and *zeugma,* and similar scare-words, which even those who have once learned them in school are afraid to venture upon unprepared in later life. A few technical terms have been so far modernized that we do well to retain them, as *synonym, simile, metaphor,* etc. But the unfamiliar ones, if they mean anything, can be translated into English words, and if not, can be dropped. The plain English term has here been always preferred. Even difficult matters have been made to seem simple and easy where possible by simple explanations and the use of simple words. A seemingly off-hand statement has been put in place of a scholastic utterance in the belief that people learn best when they are not scared;—when the matter considered is presented, not as the rare attainment of a few erudite scholars, but as something "on the level," in which the multitude, they themselves, starting where they are, and as they are, may expect to attain success.

With the same object in view it has been found necessary to set a limit to the number of topics treated. The "elements of rhetoric" are so numerous that any attempt to cover them all in a book of moderate size reduces them to little more than an inventory or catalogue. Such an inventory may be very useful, as a dictionary is, for definition and for reference, but it is not very readable. By its condensation all the elements of rhetoric are placed practically upon a level, with no chance for variety or emphasis or play of thought and fancy—that is, with no chance for the very things the book is to teach—so that a treatise on rhetoric is often the driest and most unreadable thing that one can take up. In place of such crowding, it has seemed better to treat quite fully certain main ele-

ments of the study, opening vistas, at certain points, with confidence that the student will almost instinctively apply the method, thus found interesting and helpful, to other branches of the great study. He will not know all of rhetoric, but what he knows, he will *know*.

This method of treatment has succeeded in actual trial. These chapters were lectures given for a series of years to a class of about fifty students in the Young Men's Christian Association of Washington, D. C., and also to a class of public school teachers assembled under the same auspices. The young men were clerks, stenographers, secretaries of senators, members of the staffs of various Washington papers, etc. They represented hundreds of thousands of bright young Americans who having learned enough to know that they should know more, but being engaged in the rush of life to make their way and their subsistence, were limited to such knowledge as could be rapidly gained. It was the importunity of these students, their delight in the course, and their assurance of its practical helpfulness that first moved the author to publish the series. The familiar personal tone of the class-room lecture has been to a considerable degree retained, and the student seeking to make his way in studying by himself has been remembered with interest and sympathy, and numerous simple directions given for his benefit, as throughout chapters VI, IX, XVIII, and XIX, and on pages 96, 104-107, 117, 120, 159, 174, 220-221, 257-258, 295, 315, 337, 340, 352, 372-3-4, and numerous others. Whether studied in the class or individually, it is believed the book will be found readable and helpful for the mastery of important points of English style. J. C. F.

*Montclair, N. J.*, June 6, 1918.

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## CHAPTER I

## THE SIMPLICITY OF ENGLISH

Excellence in English is often sought too far afield. The trouble with many English grammarians and rhetoricians has been that they have known too much. By the time a man has mastered the hundreds of parts of the Latin and the Greek verb and the Hiphil, Hophal, and Hithpael of the Hebrew; when he knows the five declensions of Latin and the three of Greek nouns, and the various declensions of adjectives to suit all those nouns; when he has labored through the Slough of Despond of German genders, and added a light fringe of French, Spanish, and Italian eccentricities, he is apt to become an incarnate inflection. He feels that language exists in order to be inflected. That is what it is for. It is beautiful and rich according as it can be tabulated in paradigms under the law of permutations. If he is a teacher, the possibilities of browbeating and sidetracking pupils, and of enticing them into labyrinths where he alone holds the thread, become so alluring and soul-satisfying that he looks upon all that is self-evident and straightforward with the scorn of an expert in mysteries and occult arts.

When there are no more dead or otherwise foreign languages to conquer, he sweeps his glance over the unfortunate English speech and sees it destitute and denuded of all its beloved intricacy—only here and there some remnant of old declension or conjugation standing

separate and lonely, like surviving stumps after a forest fire. His grammatical soul aches over the "lost inflections," and he puts on sackcloth and ashes for the "poverty" of his native tongue. English simplicity has become the "wailing place" of grammatical exiles.

In this strange language, which simply adds one word to another and depends on having every word in its natural place, it is no longer possible to bury the subject in a mass of vocables and extricate it by the sure token that it is the only noun in the sentence which is not in the genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, or ablative case, and must, therefore, be the long-lost subject; or to put the adjective at one end of the sentence and the noun at the other, and have them respond to each other like the poles of an electric battery, however many miles of insulated wire the current may have to pass through between them.

If compelled to express himself in this absurdly simple speech, he finds unexpected difficulties for want of the linguistic stays and trusses on which his foreign models have accustomed him to depend, and suffers the fate of the cab-horse in "Pickwick" that "would fall down as soon as he was took out of harness." He writes sentences like the card which a Greek professor is said to have put on the door of a college chapel at Oxford, "Chapel will commence tomorrow morning at nine o'clock, and continue until further notice." He discovers—or, at least, his readers or hearers discover—that the seeming ease of English expression is a fine art, which no one may hope to attain by laboriously learning "how not to do it." He longs to recast the language, and run it into traditional molds, from which it should come forth with cogs and cams and dovetails to be interlocked with mathematical precision.

For some centuries the mechanics of language labored hard to import into English exotic complications, especially adaptations of Latin rules and idioms. But those importations did not thrive in the rigorous English climate, where the winds of common sense are so very free and strong; and there is now a prevalent disposition to make the best of a bad bargain, holding that as we are saddled with a language that knows no better than to say outright what it has to say, we must try to get some approximate order into this makeshift speech, giving attractive glimpses here and there of the beautiful inflected languages, ancient and modern, which the pupil may hope to learn in the happier days to come, and the learning of which is the chief use of the formless English speech.

Hence, English grammar has been largely apologetic, its keynote being that we express ourselves in this or that way because we can do no better, and that such a method is the best means of handling these loose threads of language, which have never been properly wound upon the bobbin of inflection. Richard Grant White proposed to cut the Gordian knot by treating English as "The Grammarless Tongue." But his system did not prevail because it was not a system. The stubborn subconsciousness of the English-speaking world knows that there is a grammatical system in our language, if it can only be exhumed from under the explanations in which it has been buried.

The key of this system is simplicity—always the most elusive thing in any line of research. Scholarship can discover everything except the obvious. The simplicity of English, which has been the torment of learned research, is the triumph and glory of the existing speech. The simplification of English speech was at first a dis-

covery of happy accident, and then wrought out of set purpose through centuries of struggle and conflict.

The founders of our English were a new people. In the fifth century of the Christian era, when the Roman Empire, which had stamped on the whole known world the seal of antiquity and imperialism, was tottering to its well-deserved fall, certain wild tribes, steadily driven northward before the Roman power, but never bowing to its dominion, had reached the bleak and barren shores of the North Sea. History calls them Jutes, Angles, and Saxons. As the land behind was closed to them, they took to the sea, and became the most daring of mariners and pirates. Not a shore but trembled when the horizon line was broken by their long black galleys filled with reckless freebooters who feared neither wave, nor storm, nor sword. When they found Britain defenceless, they descended upon it, exterminated or swept away the inhabitants and wiped every vestige of Roman civilization off the face of the land, except the Roman roads embedded in the soil. They started their world anew, and cut history in two with the sword. British history ends, and English history begins, with the Anglo-Saxon invasion in 449 A.D.

These Anglo-Saxon conquerors of Britain had no past. All the storied centuries, from civilization's far beginnings,—the marvels of sculptured Egypt, all the record of Babylon and Nineveh and Tyre, of Greece and Rome, were to them a blank. They knew no more of antiquity than if they had just come into being on a newly created planet. There they were. There was the sea which they knew how to tame and to traverse. There was the subjugated land under their feet. Their language was like themselves. It was nothing to them how other men had spoken. How could they best utter what they had

to say? They had nothing to learn from the Britons whom they conquered on every battle-field, nor from once imperial Rome, that now could not send one legion to dispute their dominion.

There were differences of dialect among these Jutes, Angles and Saxons, but when all were shut up together in the conquered island, in order to live, trade, or even fight together, they were compelled to learn one another's speech. In so doing, they stumbled, all unknowingly, upon a great law of language, that when different languages of kindred stock meet and coalesce in the same territory, the effect is to drop inflections; root-words are retained, but case-endings, niceties of conjugation and other mere refinements and complications are discarded. Thus, as the invaders became fused into one people in England, their different dialects were blended in a modified language of increased simplicity. Scarcely was their conquest completed and their unity secured, ere the fame of their prosperity attracted new swarms of Northmen from Scandinavian and Danish shores—all indiscriminately called Danes—who conquered wide districts, and even, for a time, put on the throne of England a line of Danish kings. The whole process of fusion of languages had to be done over again, and the speech of the new invaders was blended with the Anglo-Saxon, still in the line of simplicity, dropping what was complicated, and retaining what was easy to learn, while broadening the base of the language by the infusion of new elements. Then, upon the mingled peoples fell the mailed hand of the Norman, crushing them closer together, while for three hundred years the Normans occupied themselves in a vain endeavor to make Englishmen talk French, till at last it occurred to them that it would be easier for themselves to learn English.

But in the long contest the Saxons had absorbed much from the French, still simplifying what they appropriated. They fell upon the French language, so far as they condescended to adopt it, as the Norman invaders had fallen upon their own island. Every French word, in order to be naturalized, had to pass under the English yoke, and no French word that has been through that process is ever recognized by the natives when it goes back home. On the fine inflections of French grammar the Englishman set his stubborn heel. He would use the French word if he must, but upon it he would play no foreign variations. Still less, if possible, would the Norman conquerors bother with what they deemed the barbarous intricacies of the Anglo-Saxon, and those were dropped by mutual consent. Thus a composite language was evolved, simpler than either of its prototypes.

The fierce, and often apparently aimless contests of centuries blend in one great unity. From the landing of Hengist to the death of Chaucer—almost a thousand years—the process is one, the fusion of competing languages, always in the direction of simplicity, always rejecting complications of structure, always choosing the simpler forms. Simplification of speech had now come to seem natural to the Englishman. It had been from time immemorial an inherent process of language as he knew it. He had proved this simplicity to be consistent with clearness, and his practical good sense recognized that simplicity is power. Then he bent all his inventive skill to secure for his language the fulness of this inherent power. He carried simplification constantly further of set and earnest purpose. Whenever he found a form still lingering that was troublesome, he weeded it out. All the tripping terminations that make so much

of the music of Chaucer's poetry went by the board. There should never be two syllables where one would do. The short, simple words are the most effective on the sea, in the market, in the camp and on the battle-field,—*come, go, hark, hear, march, charge, halt!* Any added syllable would weaken those terms of concentrated force. In grammar every inflection must show a reason for its existence, or cease to exist. Whatever was difficult and complicated must go, unless the proof of its utility was stronger than the presumption against its difficulty.

The reason commonly given for the substitution of the second person plural for the second person singular—"you" instead of "thou"—that it originated as a fad of courtesy,—may explain its origin, but its universal adoption is due to a deeper reason, namely, that the second person singular of the English verb is a complicated and difficult form, while the second person plural is simple to the last degree. With every principal verb in the language, and with every auxiliary except "must", the pronoun "thou" requires a special change in the form of the verb, which is often the only break in an otherwise uniform series. Thus, in the present tense of every verb, with the single exception of the verb "be", the pronoun "you" employs the unchanged root-form of the verb, as "YOU *love, have, can, do, shall, will,*" etc., while "thou" requires a change of form, as "THOU *lovest, hast, canst, dost, shalt, wilt,*" etc. In every such choice the unchanged root-form has always the right of way. Again, with every pronoun but "thou"—still excepting the one verb "be"—the past tense of every verb is absolutely uniform, as "*I, he, we, you, they, loved, had, could, did, should, would,*" but with "thou" we are driven to say "thou *lovedst, hadst, couldst, didst, shouldst, wouldst,*" etc. Moreover, some

of these forms are uneuphonic and exceedingly difficult to utter, requiring careful drill and momentary pause to shape the vocal organs for the utterance, as in *couldst, shouldst, mightst, commandedst, interpretedst.* Having thus two forms, one of which is almost invariably complicated and difficult, while the other is, with a single exception, simple and easy, the English-speaking men trampled on the rules of grammar, bidding defiance to the distinction of singular and plural, in order to make the simple form controlling and universal. Thus "you" has become everywhere current in the busy activities of life, while "thou" is carefully laid up in the museum of antiquity or the shrine of religion.

How far this process of simplification has reached may be seen by comparing English at certain points with various other languages. Consider first the noun. The Greek noun has three declensions with five cases and three numbers, the singular, the dual, and the plural. That is, there are twelve forms in which any noun may appear, according to the special relation to be expressed. Which twelve any particular noun may take can only be known by knowing to which of the three declensions it belongs, so that it is really necessary to know thirty-six forms of the Greek noun in order to use any one noun properly. The Latin noun has five declensions and two numbers, singular and plural, with six cases in each number, making sixty forms, among which it is necessary to choose in order to use any one noun properly. The English noun is not troubled with declensions. While it has technically three cases, two of them, the nominative and the objective, are precisely alike; the possessive adds the apostrophe with *s* in the singular and without *s* in the plural. The regular plural form adds *s* or *es* to the singular, with a small list

of practically eight irregular plurals, as *mice* and *men*, and a few foreign plurals like *strata* and *memoranda*.

But the crowning triumph of English is to be found in the simplicity of grammatical gender—that is, gender of words as words, irrespective of sex in the objects they represent. All the other leading languages give masculine or feminine gender to names of objects with which no thought of sex can be rationally associated, as mountains, rivers, trees, clothes, tools, articles of furniture, members of the human or animal body, etc. Some of these languages, as the French, Italian, and Spanish, have no neuter gender, so that every inanimate object must be represented by a masculine or feminine noun. Hence we often have a quiet smile when the Frenchman or Italian in his early experiments with English, speaks of the chair or table as "she". In languages like Greek, Latin, and German, which have a neuter gender, that gender is sometimes so capriciously applied that a neuter noun may be used for a living being which must have sex, as the German nouns *mädchen*, "maiden," and *weib*, "wife," "woman," are neuter. Ingenious theories have been advanced as to the giving of gender to inanimate objects on account of fauns, dryads, and other divinities, more or less divine, which were originally supposed to preside over some of them; but the elusive gender far outruns the theory. Why, for instance, should a man's head be feminine in Greek, neuter in Latin, feminine in French, masculine in German, and feminine again in Italian? The unpoetical fact seems to be that all this is due to a certain stupidity of generalization. Men of the early day seem to have concluded that because some nouns naturally have gender, therefore gender was an inevitable property of the noun *per se*, and they inflicted it accordingly, without reason or discrimination, upon

every unfortunate noun that came in their way. Then, as languages were artificially perfected, nouns were made masculine, feminine or neuter according to classification or termination without the slightest reference to nature.

Here English made an entirely new departure, so that gender, as far as it is indicated in our language, usually follows the meaning of the noun to which it is applied. "English stands entirely alone in making gender a rational and intelligible distinction; males are masculine, females are feminine, and inanimate things neuter." *

The distinctiveness of English in this respect is strikingly illustrated by a comparison of dictionaries. Take a Greek, Latin, German, French, or Italian dictionary, and look down its columns; after every noun you will find a little letter, *m, f,* or *n,* as the case may be, denoting the noun as masculine, feminine, or neuter. The gender must be expressly noted, because it is arbitrary, and by no means surely indicated by the meaning of the word. Now look down the columns of an English dictionary, noticing the nouns, and you will not find one *m, f,* or *n.* In English alone the gender is unnoted, because the meaning of the word usually tells it all, and no further specification is required. If the noun denotes a male being, it must, of course, be masculine; if a female being, feminine; if an inanimate object, neuter. Hence the English dictionary alone dispenses —and alone can dispense—with notification of gender.

That poetic personification which sometimes refers to the sun as masculine or to the moon as feminine, or the sailor's reference to his ship as "she," constitutes no real exception to the rule, for in plain prose we say of the sun or the moon "*its* distance," "*its* diameter," or the

* Ramsey: "The English Language and English Grammar," p. 231.

like, and we read in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures, "The waves beat into the ship, so that *it* was now full." It is an inestimable advantage in our language that all the innumerable nouns denoting inanimate objects are regularly of the neuter gender, as by laws of thought they ought to be. That which is soulless in nature is naturally neuter in language.

But, not satisfied with even this sweeping generalization, the English language takes a long step farther, and leaves the great majority of nouns denoting living beings utterly indeterminate in gender. No one can tell by the word itself whether *friend, neighbor, companion, animal, quadruped, fish,* or *bird* is masculine or feminine. A *monarch,* a *sovereign,* a *citizen* or a *subject* may be a man or a woman; so may a *writer,* an *author,* or an *editor,* an *agent* or an *attorney,* an *artist,* a *sculptor* or a *musician,* a *teacher* or an *instructor,* a *guest* or a *visitor,* a *relative* or a *stranger,* an *enemy* or a *foe;* nor does the word we use indicate the sex of *parent, babe, baby, child, ancestor* or *descendant.* We know that these words are not neuter because they do not denote inanimate objects, and that is all we do know about them, as regards gender.

Thus we have a multitude of such familiar nouns as *acquaintance, advocate, amanuensis, assailant, assistant, associate, attorney, citizen, clerk, companion, comrade, cousin, enemy, foe, friend, historian, interpreter, lunatic, maniac, martyr, monarch, nurse, opponent, patient, person, physician, relation, relative, reporter, secretary, sovereign, witness;* practically all the innumerable nouns in *er,* as *buyer, doer, driver, giver, hearer, intruder, invader, interviewer, reader, receiver, singer, speaker, stenographer, stranger, traveler, voyager, worshiper, writer;* all nouns in *ist,* as *antagonist, artist, chemist, copyist, geologist, pianist, psychologist, zoologist;* most

nouns in *or*, as *author, contractor, counselor, doctor, editor, orator, visitor;* most names of animals, as *ape, bear, beaver, bird, butterfly, elephant, fish, monkey, mule, ostrich, robin, shark, swallow,* and innumerable others. The English language, for the most part, disregards gender in nouns.

Is not this indefiniteness an oversight and a defect in the language? On the contrary, it is a concession to the natural movement of human thought. If we say, "This error was made by the copyist," the sex of the copyist is not of the slightest consequence. The very thing we want is a word that will not oblige us to ascertain historically whether the copying was done by a man or a woman, before we can complete our sentence. The noun *copyist* is indeterminate in gender because we wish it to be so, and it will be found that every synonym we can use for that noun, *amanuensis, secretary, stenographer, transcriber,* or *typewriter,* is similarly indeterminate. It would cramp the language and restrict freedom of speech, if we were to tie such a word to a definite gender. The same law of thought controls, for the most part, with reference to the various animals. If a person is chased by a bear in the woods, or kicked by a vicious mule, the sex of the animal is ordinarily a matter of indifference, and it is a decided convenience that he does not have to determine the gender of his noun before he can report the incident. This non-identification of gender has become the general characteristic of English nouns denoting living beings. So far has this been carried that the number of English nouns in ordinary use that can be classed as distinctively masculine or feminine does not probably exceed one hundred and fifty. The active tendency of the English language is to minimize gender in nouns.

Turning now to the article and the adjective, and treating these for the moment as separate, we find in them a still more conclusive triumph of English simplicity. In the languages that have so emphasized gender in nouns, it seems to have been thought that the articles and the adjectives must also have gender, in order to move in the same society. In Greek the article and the adjective are both declined, having each three genders, three numbers and five cases. Before using a Greek article or adjective it is necessary to settle the gender, number, and case of the noun, and then to use a special form of article or adjective according to the gender, number, and case of the noun to be employed.

The Latin took the short method with the article by abolishing it altogether; but the Latin has three declensions of adjectives in three genders and two numbers, making it necessary to settle the gender, number and case of the noun, and then use a special form of the adjective to match the gender, number, and case of the noun employed. One must know some seventy or eighty principal adjective forms in either language in order to be sure of applying the right form of adjective to any noun it is desired to use; and when we add comparatives and superlatives, which are also declined, and various irregular and variant forms, the number may be increased almost indefinitely. In German the articles, definite and indefinite, are both declined, while the adjective has two forms of declension, the strong and the weak, with three genders, two numbers, and four cases diversifying all. Then the combinations of the adjective forms with those of the article vary from the scheme in an arbitrary way which is to the foreigner highly confusing.

Over against all this complexity we set the English

article and adjective, absolutely without declension. *A*, with its euphonic variant *an*, or the never-changing *the*, may be used with any noun in any gender, person, number, or case. Against all the varying forms of adjectives in other tongues we set the constant English form that knows no change, whatever may happen to be the noun which it modifies. *Good, bad, fast, slow, wise, foolish, strong, weak* or whatever the adjective may be, the English-speaking person needs to learn the original form but once, and it is his in perpetuity. He will never be troubled with vowel changes or new terminations in all after time. He does not appreciate the gain made by this emancipation of the adjective until he tries to learn one of the "highly inflected languages," in which he finds himself strangely cramped. However well he may know the noun he would use, yet he can not speak, because he can add no article or adjective till he has first diagnosed the gender, person, number, and case of that noun, and then selected, from a tabulated collection an article or adjective of that same gender, person, number, and case—the only one that may properly be administered. He finds himself in the position of the lady who can not put on a perfectly comfortable pair of gloves, because they are not of the right shade to match her gown. In his mother-tongue he has no such perplexities. There he may start with article or adjective in one unvarying form, and wait for the noun to come along, knowing that the combination can not fail to be right. He can not make a mistake, because there is none to be made. The child or the foreigner has to learn the form of an English adjective but once, and that form is right in all possible situations, for there is no change.

There may be said, indeed, to be a certain loss. In English it is not possible, as in those other tongues,

to toss an adjective into a sentence anywhere, and be sure of fitting it to some wandering noun, as you identify your trunk in the baggage-room by the duplicate check. The English adjective must keep in close touch with its noun, and can be known as belonging to it only by the order of words. But this loss is a gain, for the English order of words is also the order of thought. However far the adjective may be from its noun in the inflected languages, the mind must ultimately bring them together, jumping over the interjected words, in order to complete the thought. But the English puts the adjective beside its noun, so that the mind associates the connected ideas at the start, and no intellectual acrobatics are required. The verbal athlete may miss a spectacular performance, but the speaker or the hearer, the writer or the reader, gains incalculably in readiness of apprehension. The mind receives the associated ideas together in the beginning, as it must in any event bring them together in the outcome.

Still, the critic may ask, how is it possible that this should be adequate? How can a single English article or adjective be a substitute for the many variants of either in other languages? The answer is, that the inflected languages have been carrying for ages a vast amount of useless lumber. This could, indeed, be fashioned by cunning hands into artistic shapes, but it is in no way necessary to the expression of human thought, and the English language has proved by the sure test of experience that the unmodified article and adjective can say all that article and adjective ever have to say in human speech. When we use the expression "*the good* man", "*the good* woman", "*the good* house", we could not describe either object more perfectly, though we were to torture "the" and "good" into assuming any

fantastic variations whatsoever, when they pass from modifying the masculine to modifying the feminine or the neuter noun. The English used has thus expressed all that article and adjective can express, and since modifications are not necessary, their existence in other languages is sometimes an element of weakness in those languages, and not an evidence of richness or strength. Change of form for no adequate reason has the defect of burdening the memory without illuminating the thought. It is the better machine that dispenses with needless parts.

When we pass to the English pronoun we find it almost genderless. Gender is found only in three personal pronouns of the third person, and only in the singular number in those three, *he, she* and *it,* their common plural, *they,* referring either to a masculine, a feminine, or a neuter antecedent. Yet how very seldom do we find any difficulty in making clear the gender of any antecedent to which a pronoun may refer! We are aware of no lack of pronominal gender. Rather we often think that we have still too much; when, for instance, we start into such a sentence as, "If any one fails to be present on time, *he* or *she* will lose *his* or *her* seat." Then, in our eagerness to escape, we long for a genderless singular of the pronoun of the third person to match the genderless plural, and those who are not afraid of the schoolmaster promptly retire upon the plural, using *they, their* and *them* in place of the too specific singular, wishing for less gender rather than more. Still, in the pronoun, English simplicity has done very well.

At the threshold of the verb in most languages* the specter of gender vanishes, as the goblins of old were halted by a running stream. But inflection knows no charm or spell, and descends upon the verb as its pecu-

* With rare exceptions, as of the Hebrew and Russian.

liar prey. The Greek verb has 507* parts, which the simpler Latin was able to reduce to no less than 443. Here the English language has broken all precedent. Omitting the second person singular—the forms with "thou"—the most complicated English verb, the verb *be,* has in present use but eight different forms,—*be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been.* The verb be is alone in this proud distinction. No other irregular verb has more than five changes of form; as *give, gave, gives, giving, given.* A regular verb has but four changes of form; as *love, loved, loves, loving;* and out of at least 8,000 verbs in the English language, only a little list of 200 are irregular. The modes and tenses that express the manner and time of actions are for the most part formed by auxiliary verbs—*be, can, do, have, may, must, shall, will,* and when the forms and combinations of these eight auxiliaries are once learned, they are the same for all our thousands of English verbs. Four or five forms of the principal verb combined with eight auxiliaries constitute the simple scheme that the English has to deal with in place of all the terminations and augments and internal vowel changes that other languages offer by scores and hundreds.

By reason of this marvelous simplicity, our language meets more fully than any other has ever done a fundamental law of the expression of thought in words. Herbert Spencer's famous paragraph on "Economy of Attention" might be taken as a statement of the underlying principle that has governed the historic evolution of English speech.

"Regarding language as an apparatus of symbols for the

* Curtius: "Das Griechische Verbum" (The Greek Verb), p. 5. Certain other scholars have given a much greater number. I here give the lowest scholarly estimate known to me.

conveyance of thought, we may say that, as in a mechanical apparatus, the more simple and the better arranged its parts, the greater will be the effect produced. In either case, whatever force is absorbed by the machine is deducted from the result. . . . The more time and attention it takes to receive and understand each sentence, the less time and attention can be given to the contained idea, and the less vividly will that idea be conceived."

If the men who framed our language could have consulted Spencer five hundred years in advance, and kept his exposition before them throughout all their struggles, they could scarcely have done more to realize his conception of effective expression. The discovery that conformity of the order of words to the order of thought could be a substitute for the complex machinery of inflection is one of the greatest inventions of the ages as regards the use of language, and is a triumphant success.

English simplicity is no survival of spoliation and impoverishment, no residue of linguistic decay, but an attainment, an achievement of the highest dignity and value. From the complicated constructions of the classic tongues, of the rival languages of modern Europe, and even of its parent Anglo-Saxon, English has intelligently and resolutely stripped itself free, as David put off the encumbering armor of Saul, to gain freedom as the means of power.

It would seem that this inflectionless language is what the world has been waiting for. Because its simplicity of structure puts so few obstacles in a foreigner's way, the English language is comparatively easy to learn, men of every race finding it simpler than their own. The surprize of a foreign student of English is often almost comical, as he looks around for difficulties which he can not find. His chief difficulty, indeed, is to get along without complications. He is like a swimmer accustomed

to artificial aids, who fears to trust himself to the water, though the moment he does so he is free. This facility of acquirement, joined with the enterprise and efficiency of the nations that use it, is fast making English a world-language, spoken as their vernacular by one hundred and thirty millions, and dominating the territory, the government, the business and to a great extent the thought, of five hundred millions of people.

A natural objection may be, that while a language so simple might be a ready medium of communication, yet it must be lacking in range, diversity and fulness, and so tend to barrenness and monotony. But from this result our language is preserved by its rich variety and abundance of words inherited from its diverse ancestry, and gathered by exploration, travel, commerce and conquest all around the world. Thoughts of highest sublimity and the most ordinary ideas of common life, the profound researches of science, and the light flashes of wit and humor, the fiery splendor of impassioned oratory, and the dry precision of the legal document, find equal facility of utterance in English speech. English poets for five hundred years have proved that the language, strong to wield the sword or the sledge, has also skill to tune the lyre. It is equally perfect in adaptation in Milton's sublime epic and in Tennyson's cradle song. In Shakespeare the diversity of language is as marked as the limitless versatility of portraiture. Kings and peasants, statesmen and clowns, tradesmen and soldiers, ladies and servant maids, in every extreme of frolicsome joy or furious rage or heart-broken lament, all speak English, but a different English, always apt and expressive, always fitting the character and the occasion. In the centuries since that day a vast store of new words has been added, to meet the demands of advancing and

broadening civilization, though under the controlling influence of its early type all increase of material or improvement in construction has still been in the line of perfected simplicity.

The literary development of our language has been along the line of its historical evolution. As the poet of nature and of human life, Chaucer loved the homely word and the simple idiom. The men of Elizabeth's day were sailing the seas, fighting the Armada, starting out on the Baconian method in science, and trading to the then accessible ends of the earth. Effective directness was their controlling passion. They wrought their language to a strength, vigor, and melody that comes to us still like a free, fresh breeze from mountain or ocean. In the ensuing age there was a reaction to artificiality, so that the really great thoughts of certain scholars and divines of that day, in their cumbrous splendor, remind us of the captive Zenobia fainting, as the legend has it, under the weight of her golden chains. All this was happily dispelled by the Cromwellian revolution. The Puritans had their own faults of style, but because they were fighting for very life on earth, and for the hope of eternal life beyond, they were real to the uttermost. Finical embroideries of speech had for them no place. When there arose within their own ranks a Milton, who, while he kept the faith, dared to endow it with beauty, English literature began once again to evince the high qualities of the Elizabethan era. The mental and moral emptiness of the Restoration fortunately prevented its characteristic writers from making any permanent mark upon literature, most of the favorites of the court and the play-houses of the period being now known only to scholars. Milton and Bunyan, though writing within those years, were in fact survivors of the Crom-

wellian epoch, and even Dryden owed all that was best in him to the unrecognized influence of that earlier and nobler day. Enough of English manhood survived the period of decline to make, in the succeeding age, an audience for Addison, whose triumph was the death-blow of literary affectation. Men saw and felt anew what the power of genuine English, unfettered and untrammeled, could be. Pope, while failing of the simplicity of nature, was a consummate master of the simplicity of art. Johnson, with all his Latinisms, was found to be at his best in his simplest and most idiomatic utterances. Goldsmith's poetry and prose, clear and bright as the waters of a running stream, helped the movement on. Burke, even in his most ornate periods, strove for luminous clearness as the means by which to convince and persuade. It was proved to demonstration that English needed not to seek extrinsic adornments, but merely to develop its own inherent power, and that the simple was also the strong, the beautiful, and the successful style.

It would be possible by a survey of all the great writers down to and through the Victorian era, to show that those who had most of this quality have taken the highest place, and also that such of their works as possess most of this quality are the most admired, the most cherished, and the best remembered. The palm is ever awarded to the author who has the skill to use, and the courage to trust, the simple style, if he have but a message that will bear to be so expressed; while one who loads his page with crowded words and strained constructions is suspected of seeking a disguise to cover barrenness of thought, or censured as lacking artistic skill. The ideal of the literature responds to the ideal of the language, forcing author and orator alike to recognize that with

nobility, vigor and beauty of thought, simplicity of expression is the way to glory, honor and immortality.

We are tired of the toleration of English, instead of its frank recognition as one of the grandest languages on earth. We have nothing to apologize for in our English speech. English has discarded inflections, not because it could not keep them, but because it did not want them, and could do better without them. In every field English is the language of simplicity, of directness, effectiveness, achievement. It is the athlete of languages, appareled, not for display or ceremony but for freedom and vigor of movement. It comes into the world's battles like a war-ship, with "decks cleared for action"—into the world's toils and negotiations with the "shirt-sleeve" readiness at which European diplomatists have laughed, but which does the work, cuts the tangled knots of perplexity, and wins the prize.

The poet or the orator or the essayist is freer to seek beauty for its own sake, because not trammeled in every line or paragraph by the bonds of grammatical inflection. English says to the business correspondent, the journalist, the diplomatist, the orator in the pulpit or the forum, the poet in rapt utterance of poetic thought,—"Use words for what they mean, and no arbitrary inflections of grammar shall stand in your way". Grammar is but the servant that waits upon the sense; the armor-bearer that keeps trim and bright the sword, helmet, and shield, and hands them to the knight in the moment of need. The gold of the living language is yours, and in the English mint no mysterious cabalistic signs are impressed to make it difficult to identify and use the coin. English words exist for what they mean, and wherever they are fairly counted out shall instantly pass current as the sterling specie of thought.

English simplicity is the result of no decay or decline, no poverty of inheritance, but the steady evolution of fifteen hundred years, from the Anglo-Saxon Conquest of Britain,—the genius of the English race, generation after generation, cutting away, throwing off whatever complications stood in the way of effectiveness. Admirers of languages that riot in permutations and paradigms, declensions and conjugations and mysteries of gender, hold up their hands in distress over the "poverty of the English in inflections." But that poverty is its glory.

The unfettered freedom of English construction is a long advance toward that ideal of human utterance that may enable one mind to express all that it may ever have to express to any other mind. As our language is still living, and very much alive, with the changes that are the essence and evidence of life before it still, we may be confident that its future modification will be no retrogression to formality and complexity, but an onward movement, free as that of ocean waves, toward the full and symmetrical development of that grand simplicity which has already made it a new and illustrious power among the languages of the earth.

## CHAPTER II

## THE POWER OF ENGLISH

The English language is a power because it is a life—the life of a great people expressed in words that still live. It is not an inheritance from ancient despotisms, not an accretion through slumberous ages, not a modern manufacture made to order and for a purpose, but utterance that sprang into being in the heat and stir and glow of a people's life, pulsing with their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, their toils, discoveries, achievements, and victories; never torpid, asleep, nor decadent; never having found its limit, but beyond every advance pushing on toward a new horizon. At each stage the language has enshrined, incarnated, the thought and deeds of its earnest present to be the motive-power, the inspiration of the ages to come.

We defraud ourselves if we esteem our language lightly because it is our own. We fail of the breadth and range, the loftiness and aspiration, the strength, the tenderness, the delicate sense of beauty of which the language is capable, till, with loss of expression, thought itself is cramped, dwarfed, belittled, starved. So, too, we throw ourselves out of sympathy with those master-spirits who have wrestled with the genius of language, till they have won such store of power that through their utterance may be seen the very workings of their mighty souls. To the very best of all they have to give us we become color-blind. In the great cathedrals of Europe may be seen from time to time some group of peasants

shambling on under the lofty arches, over the tesselated marble floor, past the pictured frescoes and mosaics and the breathing statues, with no more sign of appreciation than might be shown by a drove of oxen. They may be more impressed than we know, but on their faces is no reflected light of the beauty and glory that are all around, above, and beneath them. So thousands pass the masterpieces of English with the flippant remark that they are "not interesting," never knowing that this lack of interest simply proclaims the limitation and poverty of their own undeveloped, unresponsive minds.

We are all too apt to think of English as of the atmosphere, as something needful, indeed, and even desirable, but which we have as a matter of course. Multitudes get along with a pitifully small allowance of air, in thronged cities, crowded halls, wretched alleys, or sumptuous apartment-houses. Then, if on some holiday, they find themselves on the mountain top or the ocean shore, they are amazed to find what simple air can be, and exult in the luxury of breathing. With equal unwisdom we limit ourselves to the commonplace utterances of the shop or the office, of the household or the evening party. Then, if by chance we read a bit of genuine literature or hear an accomplished orator, we are filled with wonder and delight at the undreamed-of resources of our familiar English speech. The power is ever there, though we seldom climb to the mountain-top or stand on the free, outlooking shore.

We need to awake to the grandeur of our inheritance. The English language is one of the noblest ever spoken or written among men. It has a genius all its own, and in the hands of a master can accomplish results that can not be surpassed—and in some respects not attained

—by any other form of human speech. This is not to claim that English is superior in all respects to all other languages. We would not follow the example of Coleridge, master of English and sturdy Briton that he was, who astounded one of his audiences at the Royal Institution in London by pausing in the midst of a lecture, and devoutly thanking God that he "did not know one word of that frightful jargon, the French language!" We freely admit the splendor and beauty of the great languages in which the leaders of men have given imperishable thoughts to the world. We thank careful scholars for telling us of their excellence. But we still maintain that for every excellence they can show in other languages English can offer a compensating advantage, and that the English language has made for itself a place so high that it need not take an attitude of concession, humility, or apology before any language, living or dead, ever spoken among mortal men. It is a language worthy, not merely of approval, but of admiration, eulogy, enthusiasm.

What our language can do is best seen by considering what it has done. English literature is one of the youngest of the great literatures, for it set forth on its mighty march when the Italian was already old, and when the Greek and Latin were ancient and dead. Dante died in 1321, leaving his "Divine Comedy" a monument of perfected Italian. Chaucer died in 1400, leaving his "Canterbury Tales" as reflections of the dawn of still imperfect English. But in reality the sweep of our literature is much less than this. All the English that the world now reads to an appreciable extent dates from the Elizabethan age (1533-1603), and from the latter part of that great period. Spenser published his "Shepheard's Calendar" in 1579, and finished his

"Faerie Queene" in 1595; he was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey in 1599. Bacon published the first edition of his "Essays" in 1597. Shakespeare's first play, "Love's Labor's Lost," is placed at 1589-1590, and his "Julius Cæsar" at 1601. We might roughly assume the year 1600 as the date of Bacon and Shakespeare. It is fairly startling to perceive that within the short space of a little more than three hundred years have appeared all the most eminent English authors who have crystallized great thoughts in immortal words.

"We are ancients of the earth, in the morning of the times."

English literature has, indeed, passed the first flush of youth, but it is in the very fulness of its early prime, its brief record crowded with world-famous names.

It is remarkable that the English people, one of the most practical of all peoples,—so that they have been called "a nation of shopkeepers"—have found poetry a favorite means of expression. Under the crust of the military and the mercantile the fire of imagination has ever been burning. Perhaps it is that very imaginative power that has made them see the whole world at once as the field for their achievement, so that they have been unable to rest until their ships have traversed every sea, their soldiers and explorers crossed and their traders entered every land. The first conspicuous expression of the composite language after the Norman Conquest—aside from Wyclif's Bible—was in the poems of Langland, Gower, and Chaucer. From that point onward great poets have been so numerous that we can only mention the mere names of a few of the most conspicuous—Spenser, Shakespeare, Dryden, Milton, Pope, Cowper, Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, Shelley, Gray, Keats, Campbell, Moore, Tennyson, Goldsmith, Brown-

ing; from the New World we may add Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, Holmes, and Poe.

The English language has been rich in oratory. Pitt, Burke, Fox, Wilberforce, Brougham, Canning, Bright, Cobden, Gladstone, Whitefield, Wesley, Spurgeon, in England; and, in America, James Otis, Patrick Henry, Webster, Clay, Everett, Beecher, Lincoln; these are only a few of those whose eloquence has made them immortal; while, besides these, a vast host have, by the power of convincing and persuasive speech, influenced the march of events throughout the history of the English-speaking peoples. It is characteristic of the practical temper of those peoples that they have allowed little place to the mere splendor of fulsome and aimless oratory. They have been too earnest to be long entertained. As a rule the great English-speaking orators have spoken for some direct practical result, and their winged words have had effect in legislation, in movements of armies, and in treaties of peace; or, when not so immediately effective, have so molded public opinion that the policies for which they pleaded have crystallized into governmental action at some later day. In spite of Burke's tremendous speech of impeachment, Warren Hastings was acquitted, but that speech so swayed the public opinion of England as to compel a new and more humane governmental administration in India, so that the influence the orator then set in motion is still effective in the conduct of the British colonial administration and upon the welfare of millions in the dependencies under the British flag. Webster's eloquence failed of his primary intent, but succeeded beyond his thought. It could not avert secession, but it did prevent disunion. His stately and resonant periods, his cogent argument, and fervid pleas for the Union were declaimed year after

year by boys of the new generation in every schoolhouse throughout the North, and after his death the boom of cannon and the march of armies made real beyond debate his great aspiration for "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." English eloquence has not been wont to explode in pyrotechnics, but to crystallize into deeds.

The English language has proved itself competent in law, where it has had the hard task of expressing a new law, self-evolved. While the nations of continental Europe for the most part derive their jurisprudence from the ancient Civil Law of the Roman Empire, the English Common Law is an independent system, which grew up on English soil out of the needs and the sense of justice of the English people, and has become the basic law of most of the British Possessions, and of the entire United States, with the exception of Louisiana. The legal words were gathered where they could be found, incorporating Latin and Norman French, but all reshaped to English expression. You may go into a great law library, and see the sheep-bound books rising tier above tier, alcove within alcove; while many of them are necessarily technical, the great masters, as Blackstone, have written in language readily comprehensible by any educated reader of English, while the chief decisions of the highest courts and judges are commonly given in language of exceeding simplicity, and are often fascinating studies, merely as examples of condensed expression, simple and clear, and at the same time vigorous and imbued with substantial and commanding strength.

English holds an eminent place as a language of story-telling. From "Piers Plowman" and the "Travels of Sir John Maundevile," in the fourteenth cen-

tury through Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales;" through Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" and Swift's "Gulliver's Travels;" through the works of the great novelists, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Hawthorne, Irving, and many another; through the powerful histories of Clarendon, Robertson, Hume, Gibbon, Milman, Hallam, Carlyle, Macaulay, Froude, Prescott, Motley, Parkman, Bancroft; through a host of biographies led by Boswell's inimitable "Life of Johnson;" through stories of travel, exploration and adventure in every land and on every sea, English has proved its facility and felicity in narrative; the charm even of many of its finest poems being that of a story exquisitely told.

English has developed the essay to wonderful power: that limited expression, without the fulness of a treatise, copious and yet free, where the writer says on one topic the best he has to say then and there, free to expand under rush of thought, free to stop whenever his present information is exhausted or his immediate interest flags; then, at pleasure, to take up some wholly different topic in the same off-hand way. The practical directness of the English-speaking people has made this form of writing peculiarly attractive to them, and so successful have English essayists been that one who should read only essays, as of Bacon, Addison, Johnson, Macaulay, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, Lamb, Tyndall, Huxley, Emerson, Lowell, Fiske, and Stedman, would gain a very wide view of history, biography, philosophy, religion, science, literature, and art, as well as of the movement of thought of various epochs. It is true that his view would be often fragmentary, and that he would be looking through colored glasses, strongly tinted by the individuality of the various writers; but everything

would be vivid, while the essays themselves are literature, affording in themselves many noble examples of the power and beauty of English style. For the drama, it is necessary only to mention Shakespeare, great as a poet, but supreme by the world's consent in dramatic power.

English names are great in philosophy, science, and invention: Bacon, pioneer of the inductive method; Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Reid, Stewart, Mill, Hamilton, Jonathan Edwards, strong thinkers on the mysteries of the human mind and of the universe; Darwin, who revolutionized the conception of animate nature by his theory of evolution; Harvey, who discovered the circulation of the blood; the Herschels, who enabled thought to traverse as never before the starry spaces; Newton, discoverer of the law of gravitation; Watt, who made available the mighty power of steam; Fulton, who was one of the first to set the steam-engine afloat, and gave to steam navigation that practical utility which has revolutionized commerce on all the waters of the world; Franklin, who identified lightning with electricity, and put it under man's control; Morse, who taught it to write from afar in the telegraph; Bell and Edison, who enabled it to speak from afar in the telephone; the Wright brothers, making the navigation of the fields of air an accomplished fact; these, and a multitude of others, have proved English a language in which man can think to purpose. This is no idle boast, for language conditions and limits thought. When Rome wanted to appropriate the philosophy of Greece, it often found that its martial Latin tongue lacked the words adequate to express philosophical thought. It was not until Cicero brought over words from the Greek, coined new words in Latin, and gave to other Latin words new significations, that phi-

losophy could have a place among the Romans. Where men have done great thinking, that is a sure evidence that their language is one which enables them to originate great thoughts, to hold in mind their own thoughts and those of others, to turn them over, to compare them one with another, and thus work out to clear results and sound conclusions. English, originally a language of farmers, fishermen, sailors, and warriors, has risen to such capacity by natural development of its own inherent power. We shall be told, doubtless, that Bacon and Harvey wrote their scientific works in Latin, and that hence such conclusion can not apply to them. The answer is that they lived in English, the language in which they conducted all the common intercourse of life, and through which it may well be believed they thought out to those conclusions which they wrote in Latin.

Turn where we will, we find the English language a power in every department of human thought. We, whose vernacular it is, may make its treasures all our own by the mere ability to read and spell. We need but open our eyes to see the beauty and splendor enshrined for us in the masterpieces of our mother-tongue.

The longest step toward the effective use of English is to recognize its inherent power. For the estimate in which we hold our language will largely determine our efficiency in its use. If we are impressed with its worth and utility, we shall seek command of its resources. The boy or man who has an enthusiasm for baseball will learn something about the game—at least enough to understand how other people ought to play it. The girl or woman who religiously believes in the fine art of dressing well will gain a magical skill in the choice and use of all the various stuffs and adaptations, the niceties of color and form that make a perfect toilet. One who believes in

the worth of shorthand will work eagerly at its mystic signs to make his hand keep pace with uttered thought. Skill and proficiency in any pursuit come from some adequate recognition of its power and value.

A successful sea-captain tells this story of himself. When a young man, having been appointed second mate, he was invited to take an observation beside his captain, and congratulated himself on being only five or six miles out of the way. Looking out upon the vast Atlantic, he complacently remarked that he thought "that was doing pretty well;" to which the captain sternly answered, "No, sir! You had a good instrument and a clear day, and there is no excuse for your not being right. You should have known exactly where your ship was." If we lightly esteem the capacities of our language, we may drift on through life in forlorn and shabby utterance with the comfortable feeling that we are "doing pretty well." But if we once recognize our language as an instrument of precision by which one may chart all the seas of thought, we shall become aware that any failure to express ourselves well is due to some fault of our own, which it should be our first business to correct. We are too easily content to live in a corner of our inheritance, unmindful of its past greatness and possible glories:

> "As in those domes where Cæsars once bore sway,
> Defaced by time and tottering in decay,
> There in the ruin, heedless of the dead,
> The shelter-seeking peasant builds his shed;
> And, wondering man could want the larger pile,
> Exults, and owns his cottage with a smile."

We struggle with poverty in the presence of abundance. With such riches available, many persons scrape up English enough to serve as a medium of communi-

cation by which to buy groceries or dry-goods or real estate or stocks, run railroads or factories, or talk party politics or the small chat of the sidewalk, the street-car, or the evening company, and neither hope for nor imagine anything more or better. Our vigorous commercialism tends to degrade language, to destroy literature. There is no imagination in a ledger, no poetry in a bank account, no beauty or sublimity in an invoice, no rhythm and melody in a deed. We are in danger of a language of commodities rather than of emotions or ideals. Everything that does not relate to some immediate demand of common life is branded "academic," or in our slang as "high-brow." The language reacts upon the thought, and all the higher things of mind and soul are bidden to "clear the track,"—"get off the wire." If we care only to satisfy mere material wants, we invite the doom of the serpent, "On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." We may purchase financial dominion by atrophy of all the noblest powers of the soul.

A recent critic of our educational methods actually complains of a teacher who set a class of high-school girls to reading one of Jane Austen's novels and some essays from Addison's "Spectator"—"useless lumber of the past"—"when they might have read the latest magazines!" Why worry, forsooth, about any century past, when we have power to disport ourselves to the immediate present, as the insects of a day,—the Mayflies of humanity?

But we may rest assured that is not a good advance that would break with all the past, fling the glorious centuries behind us, until little we rejoice in our petty supremacy, not needing converse with the heroes and sages who have built up the very ground we stand on.

Then we are proud of being "up-to-date," like an artist who should determine to look at no picture nor statue that was made before the year 1900!

Against this spirit we would set the clear and relentless logic of Edward Everett in his Bunker Hill oration (in 1833):

"I am asked, What good will the monument do? And I ask, what good does anything do? What is good? Does anything do any good? . . . does a railroad or canal do good? Answer, yes. And how? It facilitates intercourse, opens markets, and increases the wealth of the country. But what is this good for? Why, individuals prosper and get rich. And what good does that do? Is mere wealth as an ultimate end,—gold and silver, without an inquiry as to their use,—are these a good? Certainly not. I should insult this audience by attempting to prove that a rich man, as such, is neither better nor happier than a poor one. But, as men grow rich, they live better. Is there any good in this, stopping here? Is mere animal life—feeding, working and sleeping like an ox—entitled to be called good? Certainly not. But these improvements increase the population. And what good does that do? Where is the good in counting twelve millions, instead of six, of mere working, feeding, sleeping animals? There is, then, no good in the mere animal life, except that it is the basis of that higher moral existence which resides in the soul, the mind, the conscience; in good feelings, good principles, and the good actions (and the more disinterested, the more entitled to be called good) which flow from them. Now, sir, I say that generous and patriotic sentiments, sentiments which prepare us to serve our country, to live for our country, to die for our country—feelings like those which carried Prescott and Warren and Putnam to the battle-field—are good, humanly speaking, of the highest order. It is good to have them, good to encourage them, good to commemorate them; and whatever tends to animate and strengthen such feelings does as much right down practical good as filling up low grounds and building railroads. This is my demonstration."

In the crash of the Civil War—which was "practical" if ever anything was—we needed soldiers, dollars, guns; but we needed, even more, ideals and enthusiasm to strike a soul through them all. Then the gray memorial shaft on hard-fought Bunker Hill became the inspiration for Gettysburg; and in the stern four years of conflict Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," was worth to the Union cause more than a reinforcement of a hundred thousand men; in fact, it was sung by host after host, as they came marching in, again and again, "three hundred thousand more."

We shall need the thrill of grand ideals and enthusiasms still for the different struggles and conflicts of the present and the coming time. We shall need the power of all the good that has come to us from days gone by, to make our day helpful and memorable to those who shall follow us, when our present shall have become their past. For this we must have words of power in which great thoughts may be expressed; for principles and aspirations, unless uttered in words or presented in word-pictures before the mind, are never effective, and do not long subsist. If we fail of what is worthiest in our native speech, we shall in the same degree limit the expansion and exaltation of our own mind and soul. Such power—like all else that is worth the winning—can be won only by those willing to pay the price. In the words of that accomplished scholar of the nineteenth century, George P. Marsh: *

"English is not a language which teaches itself by mere unreflecting usage. It can be mastered in all its wealth, in all its power, only by conscious, persistent labor."

* "Lectures on the English Language," lect. i.

We must know the scope and resources of the language, its rules of construction, its elements of various power, effective now for one result, and again for a widely different purpose; we must know its masterpieces, and those not of any single period, for no one age can produce a literature. While gathering the riches of the present, we must be covetous of the ampler treasures of the storied past. To put ourselves back in time, to let ourselves go, and mentally reproduce the conditions and thoughts of the men of other days, develops the imagination, broadens the range of thought, and makes the very words of our language rich with the content of centuries.

Glance backward to the Elizabethan period, and note a soldier's portrayal of a peaceful rural scene. Everybody has heard of Sir Philip Sidney and his "Arcadia," but how many have ever read a line of it? Study the following extract, and its beauty will grow upon you.

"The third day after, in the time that the morning did strow roses and violets in the heavenly floore against the comming of the sunne, the nightingales (striving one with the other which could in most daintie varietie recount their wrong-caused sorrow), made them put off their sleep; and, rising from under a tree, which that night had bin their pavilion, they went on their journey, which by-and-by welcomed Musidorus' eies, wearied with the wasted soile of Laconia, with delightfull prospects. There were hills which garnished their proud heights with stately trees; humble vallies whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; medowes enamelled with all sorts of eye-pleasing flowers; thickets which, being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so to by the cheerfull disposition of many well-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober securitie, while the prettie lambes, with bleating oratorie, craved the dammes comfort; here a shepheard's boy piping as though he should never be old; there a young shepheardesse knitting, and withall singing: and it seemed

that her voice comforted her hands to worke, and her hands kept time to her voice musick. As for the houses of the countrey, for many houses came under their eye, they were all scattered, no two being one by the other, and yet not so farre off that it barred mutual succor; a show, as it were, of an accompanable solitarinesse, and of a civil wildenesse. . . .

"But this countrey where now you set your foot is Arcadia. . . . This countrey being thus decked with peace, and the child of peace, good husbandry, these houses you see so scattered are of men, as we two are, that live upon the commoditie of their sheepe, and therefore, in the division of the Arcadian estate, are termed shepheards; a happy people wanting (lacking) little, because they desire not much."

The "Arcadia" was written in 1580 and published in 1590; yet we can read it freely to-day, merely remarking some oddities of spelling, and a certain quaintness of language which only adds to its charm, as in that thoroughly English ideal of country life, with homes entirely separate and independent, "no two being one by the other," yet not too far removed, producing the effect of "an accompanable (companionable) solitude and a civil wildenesse (wildness)."

From the same period let us choose from Spenser's "Faerie Queene," a poetic description of a scene of idyllic peace, where the music of the verse even enhances the beauty of the scene, which it brings, as in a fair picture, before our very sight:

"A little lowly hermitage it was
Down in a dale, hard by a forest's side,
Far from resort of people that did pass
In travel to and fro; a little wide
There was a holy chappel edifide.*
Wherein the Holy hermit duly wont to say
His holy things each morn and eventide;
Thereby a chrystal stream did gently play,
Which from a sacred fountain welled forth alway."

* Built.

That is our own English very slightly changed. The Elizabeth era seems not so very far away. Of that era, the greatest author can be represented by no selection; for, as has already been said, Shakespeare's limitless versatility gives every range of style,—the solemn, dignified speech of princes and prelates, statesmen and generals, in triumph and in disaster, the talk of rustics and workingmen and common soldiers, of queens, of courtly ladies, of tradesmen's wives, of housemaids and milkmaids. We can not cull out any single utterance, and say, "This is Shakespeare." But as an example of his higher range of thought and utterance, we may choose the Soliloquy of the Sleepless King:

"How many thousand of my poorest subjects
Are at this hour asleep!—O sleep, O gentle sleep,
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
And husht with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
Under the canopies of costly state,
And lull'd with sounds of sweetest melody?

. . . . . .

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude, imperious surge;
And in the visitation of the winds
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
With deaf'ning clamors in the slippery clouds,
That with the hurly, death itself awakes?
Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose
To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude,
And in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot,

Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down,
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." *

That, in its mingled dignity and simplicity, is not far remote from the speech of to-day, except for here and there a word.

For an even simpler style, and more purely Anglo-Saxon, we may pass over a century to Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," finished in 1676. Bunyan seems to us old. We can scarcely persuade ourselves that he lived so late as in the reign of Charles II. He was in the Restoration, but not of it. He had come over from the Cromwellian era, full of Puritan thought and speech. Never connected with the court, never favored by princes, by the wealthy or the great, he kept the language of the common people, as it had survived through lapse of time and changes of dynasty. In him we see how good a speech the "plain people" of England had maintained, however scholarly fashions might change. In the words of Macaulay:

"The style of Bunyan is delightful to every reader and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression if we except a few technical terms of theology which would puzzle the rudest peasant. We have observed several pages which do not contain a single word of more than two syllables. Yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say. For magnificence, for pathos, for vehement exhortation, for subtle disquisition, for every purpose of the poet, the orator, and the divine, this homely dialect, the dialect of plain workingmen, was perfectly sufficient." †

In another place Macaulay said that no man ever had

* "K. Henry IV," Part II, Act III, Sc. 1.

† Essay, "On Southey's Edition of the Pilgrim's Progress."

to read a sentence of Bunyan's twice, in order to know what it meant.

Let us quote only his description of the scene after the pilgrims passed the dark river and came up to the gate of the Celestial City.

"Now I saw in my dream that those two men went in at the gate, and, lo! as they entered, they were transfigured, and had raiment put on them that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave to them, the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honor. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and it was said unto them, 'Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.'

"Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the city shone like the sun, and the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord.'

"And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them."

Of the same period as Bunyan, and also a survivor of the Puritan day, in which he had been Latin Secretary of the State Council under Oliver Cromwell, but, unlike Bunyan, endowed with all that the best private and university education, enriched by foreign travel, could give, John Milton stands forth as representative of the older English, joined with all that was worthiest in the culture of the newer time. Of his verse, let us consider two noble sonnets, of which most persons know only one or two ever-quoted lines. To gain the realistic touch, to realize what the privation of his blindness meant to the living man in daily life, and to feel the sustained sublimity of high motive pervading that life,

one needs to read—and to ponder—all the words as written out of that grand mind and heart:

To Cyriack Skanner, 1655.

"Cyriack, this three years' day these eyes, though clear
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun or moon or star throughout the year,
Or man or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In Liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask
Content, though blind, had I no better guide."

On His Blindness, 1655.

"When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly * ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly, Thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

All know Milton's greatness as a poet, but few are aware of the power of his strenuous prose. So much

* In the old sense of "weakly" or "foolishly."

of it deals with controversies which had gone before our day, and were often so bitter even for that stormy time, that we often fail to find the strong and even beautiful utterances hidden in his rugged tracts. Let us quote but one paragraph:

OF TRUTH

"And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth to be put to the worse in a fair and open encounter? . . . For who knows not that Truth is strong, next to the Almighty; she needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power."

Of all Dryden's poetry nothing surpasses in vigor the lines which he wrote in his young manhood in his "Heroic Stanzas to the Memory of Oliver Cromwell."

Having said of him,

"His ashes in a peaceful urn shall rest,
His name a great example stand to show,
How strangely high endeavor may be blest,
Where piety and valor jointly go,"

he summarizes his conquering career in the four swift lines:

"Swift and resistless through the land he passed,
Like that bold Greek who did the East subdue,
And made to battles such heroic haste,
As if on wings of victory he flew."

Let us next turn to a style lighter and more varied, and take up Addison's incomparable "Spectator." We may consider the paper, number 231, from the third volume, the very volume which, as Franklin relates, so in-

terested him in his boyhood,—an essay on true and false modesty. The essay is introduced by a letter,—which, of course, is written by Addison himself—as follows:

"Mr. Spectator:—You, who are no stranger to public assemblies, can not but have observed the awe they often strike on such as are obliged to exert any talent before them. This is a sort of elegant distress to which ingenuous minds are the most liable. . . . Many a brave fellow, who has put his enemies to flight in the field, has been in the utmost disorder upon making a speech before a body of his friends at home. (Observe the fine antithesis between 'enemies' and 'friends,' 'field' and 'home'.) One would think there was some kind of fascination in the eyes of a large circle of people when darting all together upon one person. I have seen a new actor in a tragedy so bound up by it, as to be scarce able to speak or move. . . . It would not be amiss if such an one were at first introduced as a ghost or a statue, until he recovered his spirits and grew fit for some living part."

To this the "Spectator" replies:

"A just and reasonable modesty does not only recommend eloquence, but sets off every great talent which a man can be possessed of. It heightens all the virtues which it accompanies; like shades in painting it raises and rounds every figure, and makes the colors more beautiful, though not so glaring as they would be without. . . .

"There is another kind of vicious modesty, which makes a man ashamed of his person, his birth, his profession, his poverty, and the like misfortunes, which it was not in his choice to prevent, and is not in his power to rectify. If a man appears ridiculous by any of the aforementioned circumstances, he becomes much more so by being out of countenance for them. They should rather give him occasion to exert a noble spirit, and to palliate those imperfections which are not in his power by those perfections which are; or, to use a very witty allusion of an eminent author, he should be like Cæsar, who, because his head was bald, covered that defect with laurels."

It is vain to attempt a critical analysis of Addison. Many critics have tried it, and all have been foiled by a something in the style that is beyond them. At first glance every sentence and paragraph seems so easy that you feel that any one might write like that,—until you try. The style has power without the trappings or parade of power. The reality of that power is best seen, and its greatness best measured by its effects. Its seeming lightness and ease produced results at which we wonder still, changing the thought of all England, and deluding a corrupt society into the admiration of virtue. It is best to read Addison as we breathe mountain air, drawing in a stimulus, strength, and vigor which we can not wholly explain.

Dr. Samuel Johnson's work may be taken as representative of the Latinized style. Johnson has often been criticised for using that element to excess, and filling his pages with *-ations* and *-osities*. But you will find in his writings much that is at once strong, refined, and beautiful. Note the celebrated introduction to his "History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia,"—a story which, by the way, was written in the evenings of one week, in order to pay the expenses of his mother's funeral. What command of the stores of choice English diction a man must have had to write page after page like this at that rushing speed.

"Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present will be supplied by the morrow, attend to the history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia."

Then let us consider his description of the Happy Valley, which was the princes' retreat:

"The place which the wisdom or policy of antiquity had destined for the residence of the Abyssinian princes was a spacious valley in the kingdom of Ambara, surrounded on every side by mountains, of which the summits overhung the middle part. The only passage by which it could be entered was a cavern that passed under a rock, of which it has long been disputed whether it was the work of nature or of human industry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by a thick wood; and the mouth which opened into the valley was closed with gates of iron forged by the artificers of ancient days, so massy that no man could, without the help of engines, open or shut them. The valley, wide and fruitful, supplied its inhabitants with the necessities of life, and all delicacies and superfluities were added at the annual visit which the emperor paid his children, when the iron gates were opened to the sound of music, and during eight days every one that resided in the valley was requested to propose whatever might contribute to make seclusion pleasant, to fill up the vacancies of attention, and lessen the tediousness of time. Every desire was immediately granted. All the artificers of pleasure were called to gladden the festival, the musicians exerted the power of harmony, and the dancers showed their activity before the princes, in the hope they should pass their lives in this blissful captivity, to which those only were admitted whose performance was thought able to add novelty to luxury. Such was the appearance of security and delight which this retirement afforded, that they to whom it was new always desired that it might be perpetual; and as those on whom the iron gate had once closed were never suffered to return, the effect of long experience could not be known. Thus every year produced new schemes of delight, and new competitors for imprisonment."

To show the wide variety of which our language is capable and its power of sudden adaptation to the most diverse and contrasted scenes and activities, it is worth while to read with somewhat critical care the opening stanzas of Scott's "Lady of the Lake":

"The stag at eve had drunk his fill,
Where danced the moon on Monan's rill,
And deep his midnight lair had made
In lone Glenartney's hazel shade."

At first, how calm the scene! The stag "had drunk his fill" in the silence, because there came no sight nor sound, no odor on the evening breeze, to alarm his quick, watchful sense. We see the dimly lighted glen and the gentle flow of the stream that made the moonbeams "dance" on the rippling waves. Then we observe the wary watcher seeking his restful couch "deep in the hazel shade," and the still night glides by. Sharply comes the transition to earliest dawn. Before the light had flooded the earth, while it is touching only the mountain-tops, the rising sun, hidden by the mountain, sending up its first rays to light as with a "red beacon" the highest peak, disturbance comes.

"But, when the sun his beacon red
Had kindled on Benvoirlich's head,
The deep-mouth'd bloodhound's heavy bay
Resounded up the rocky way,
And faint, from farther distance borne,
Were heard the clanging hoof and horn."

The verse and the very words fit the changing scene. The broad, open vowels—the "deep-mouthed blood-hound's"—"bay"—"resounded"—boom with the rude intrusion "up the rocky way." Then, suddenly, the words accelerate:

"As chief / who hears / his ward / er call:"

—while the next broken line,

"To arms! — the foe / men storm / the wall"

rings with the sharp alarm. At once, then,

"The antler'd monarch of the waste
Sprung from his heathery couch in haste.
But, ere his fleet career he took,
The dewdrops from his flanks he shook;
Like crested leader proud and high,
Toss'd his beam'd frontlet to the sky;
A moment gazed adown the dale,
A moment snuff'd the tainted gale,
A moment listen'd to the cry,
That thicken'd as the chase drew nigh."

The "crested leader" proves himself "monarch of the waste," calmly pausing to shake "the dewdrops from his flanks" and to take the measure of his foes, as with lifted head he "gazed adown the dale."

"Then, as the headmost foes appear'd,
With one brave bound the copse he clear'd,
And, stretching forward free and far,
Sought the wild heaths of Uam-Var."

There is the sudden bound across the barrier. Then the alliterative verse,

"And stretch / ing for / ward free / and far,"

pictures the swift, sustained run of the hunted stag in the pride of his morning strength.

Again a change! The "view" is a special hunting term. It denotes a moment of tremendous excitement. When the game that has been wearily tracked appears suddenly in "view"—in plain sight—before the pursuers' eyes, the deep "bay" of the tracing hounds breaks instantly into wild, sharp cries. The verse changes accordingly. The verb comes first,—and a verb of wild outcry:

"Yell'd on the view the opening pack;
Rock, glen, and cavern paid them back."

Then the hard, jagged sounds, in "rock, glen, paid, back," represent the harsh confusion, intensified soon.

"To many a mingled sound at once
The awaken'd mountain gave response.
A hundred dogs bay'd deep and strong,
Clatter'd a hundred steeds along,
Their peal the merry horns rung out,
A hundred voices join'd the shout;
With hark and whoop and wild halloo,
No rest Benvoirlich's echoes knew."

The varying elements that make up the riot of the hunt in full cry are crowded swiftly together.

"Far from the tumult fled the roe,
Close in her covert cower'd the doe."

The wild creatures of the waste fly or crouch before the dread invasion.

"The falcon, from her cairn on high,
Cast on the rout a wondering eye,
Till far beyond her piercing ken,
The hurricane had swept the glen."

All the human riot is minimized among nature's vast solitudes. But how tell the story of the receding tumult? How restore the scene to nature's calm again? Four lines suffice:

"Faint, and more faint, its failing din
Returned from cavern, cliff, and linn,
And silence settled, wide and still,
On the lone wood and mighty hill."

The whole story is told in forty-six lines! The reader seems to be swept from the peaceful evening through

the rushing onset with the hunters at dawn; then to be made to pause while nature reasserts her reign amid "silence wide and still."

Now study Ruskin's sumptuous and splendid description of an Alpine sunrise. One who has not traveled among vast mountain ranges will probably think the picture overdrawn, but those who have had such experience will be aware that all is but the struggling effort of language to set forth a glory that is beyond expression.

"And then wait yet for one hour, until the East again becomes purple, and the heaving mountains, rolling against it in darkness like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burnings; watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire; watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow like altar-smoke up to heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flashing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer beams through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven—one scarlet canopy—is interwoven with a roof of waving flame and burning vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels; and then, when you can look no more for gladness, and when you are bowed down with fear and love for the Maker and Doer of all this, tell me who has best delivered his message unto men."

How much of the majesty of nature human words here have told! Contrast with the "brightening east" the "heaving mountains rolling against it in darkness like waves of a wild sea"; the optical illusion pictured, as the mind gives to the giant forms in the changing light the suggestion, not of mere inert masses, but of

vast active agencies, apparently shouldering each other through mist and shadow, as they seem to crowd toward some far center,—that one word "rolling" tells the story—"rolling against it like waves of a wild sea." Mark how "the white glaciers blaze" in their winding paths about the mountains; change but the one word "blaze" to "gleam" and see how at once you have dimmed the scene. Note the "driven snow,"—perhaps the whitest thing in the visible creation, white with an inner, living light — rising "like altar-smoke up to heaven;" change that "altar-smoke" to "the smoke of altars" and observe how you have impeded the expression, how heavy it becomes. Catch the vision of "the purple lines of lifted cloud"; you know how the mists of the valleys rise, "lifted" by the beams of the morning sun into low-floating clouds, while the same sun sheds "a new glory on every wreath, as it passes by." Then you begin to perceive how much is in the magic of words, and how rich the language must be that can supply the master with store of words fitted to tell the glory of that wondrous scene.

It will not often be possible in our brief space thus to analyze selections, but these notes on the passages thus far cited will indicate how the work may be done, and each reader may follow out the method for himself without any great critical apparatus. Simply try from point to point, in any selection that interests you, to substitute other words; see if they produce the same effect, and, if not, wherein they fail. Sometimes get the thought of the passage into your mind, and then rewrite as best you can, without looking at the book. Unless you have memorized the words, you will be sure to find that you have made many changes. Wherever your expression is inferior to your author's, study to

know the reason why; and as you find out why your words are less desirable, you will by that very act perceive why his are more effective. Skill in such judgment will grow upon you, will increase your enjoyment of reading, and will react upon your own spoken or written style.

Pass now from sunset to night, and from prose to poetry again, with the following on a winter's night from Shelley's "Queen Mab":

"How beautiful this night! The balmiest sigh
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love has spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
Yon darksome rocks whence icicles depend,
So stainless that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep,
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene
Where musing solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still!"

That can be read again and again, and at every reading its beauty grows upon you. The study walls seem silently to move away, and we are out under the open sky in the still, perfect night. Change the scene again, —combine night with storm, and observe how the language responds to the sterner harmonies of nature in Byron's account of an Alpine thunder-storm, in "Childe Harold":

"The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night
And storm and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength. . . . . .
. . . . . Far along
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud."

Observe the power of that succession of simple words, "night and storm and darkness." They alone set forth the scene, needing no adjective, and almost telling the story without a verb. The "Far along" pictures the swift, long line of the lightning flash. The shivering effect of the thunder-burst is heard in the phrase, "the rattling crags." The clouds have become the "misty shroud" of the mighty Jura range, yet through the veil she answers "the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud." It needed but a poet to see and hear, and the power of the language was ready with instant response to bring to the soul of every one who can but read the sight and sound of the mighty movement of nature.

Turning again to prose, note with what thrilling realism one of England's great novelists in "David Copperfield" has described an ocean scene on England's storm-beaten shore:

"When we came in sight of the sea, the waves on the horizon, caught at intervals above the rolling abyss, were like glimpses of another shore with towers and buildings. . . .

"The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and at their highest tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse

roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the company of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys; undulating valleys (sometimes with a solitary storm-bird skimming through them) were lifted up to hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds flew fast and thick; I seemed to see a rending and upheaval of all nature."

Would you have a battle-song? Take Campbell's historic lay:

"Ye mariners of England
That guard our native seas,
Whose flag has braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze!
Your glorious standard launch again
To match another foe!
And sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow."

. . . . . .

"The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn,
Till danger's troubled night depart,
And the star of peace return.
Then, then, ye ocean warriors,
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceased to blow;
When the fiery fight is heard no more,
And the storm has ceased to blow."

The very swell of ocean and sweep of wind are in the lines. American hearts answer to their music, for we, too, love the ocean; and, though in defense of other seas and other shores, we, too, know how to "brave the battle and the breeze."

Now read two stanzas bringing the splendid movement and excitement of the battle into touching contrast with nature's quiet beauty, from Byron's stanzas on "Waterloo":

"And there was mounting in hot haste; the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war;
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar,
And, near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;
While throng'd the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips—'The foe! They come! They come!'

. . . . . .

"And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,
Dewy with Nature's tear-drops, as they pass,
Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
Over the unreturning brave—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass,
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living valor, rolling on the foe,
And burning with high hope, shall molder cold and low."

Taking these two stanzas by themselves, one can scarcely read them without tears. How the splendor of the charge melts into the moan for the slaughter of heroes: —"the unreturning brave!" Is there lack of martial energy, stir, and fire, or of tender pathos in English speech?

Coming closer to our own time, read in "The Princess" Tennyson's echo song:

"The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying."

The whole scene is pervaded by the sunset "splendor," giving to "castle walls" and "snowy summits" a beauty till then unknown; the "long" rays of the descending sun, tremulous in the evening air are seen to "shake across the lakes," and the "wild cataract" becomes more than a mere waterfall,—it "leaps in glory." Then is brought out that effect, familiar to all who have traveled in Alpine regions, of the echo repeated over and over and over again, ever fainter as borne from farther distance till strains of fairy music seem to answer each other from height to height.

"O hark, O hear! how thin and clear
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying."

From the New World let us choose only two poetic gems, each so true a classic that in its thoughtful beauty and majesty it rises beyond all limitation of time and place; and first Bryant's "To a Waterfowl":

"Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

"Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly limned upon the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

. . . . . .

"There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

"All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

"And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

"Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

"He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright."

So calmly great, so perfect in finish, yet, withal so simple, the picture grows in clearness, and the lesson in impressiveness, the oftener the lines are read. The "boundless sky," with its vastness, its "rosy depths," the "desert and illimitable air," the "far height," the "abyss of heaven," is opened before the mind, and almost visualized to the eye.

Then comes the subjective element, the human inter-

est,—like that which glorified in Holy Writ the "lilies of the field," the "fowls of the air," and the falling "sparrow,"—lifting the thought to that wise, mighty, and beneficent Power on which each human soul may depend, to "lead my steps aright."

Next a few stanzas of Whittier, of which the final one is often quoted by itself alone, though it will be seen to gain immeasurably when associated with its context. The lines are taken from that poetic confession of faith which the author entitled "The Eternal Goodness":

"I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong.

"I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

. . . . . .

"No offering of my own I have,
No works my faith to prove;
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead His love for love.

"And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

From the abundant store of oratorical material, let us select but one brief example, Chatham's words on

"Justice to America," as spoken in the House of Lords, on January 20, 1775:

"I contend not for indulgence, but for justice, to America. . . . The spirit that now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship-money in England;—the same spirit which called all England on its legs, and by the Bill of Rights vindicated the English Constitution; the same spirit which established the great fundamental, essential maxim of your liberties, that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent. This glorious Whig spirit animates three millions in America, who prefer poverty with liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence; and who will die in defense of their rights as men, as freemen. What shall oppose this spirit, aided by the congenial flame glowing in the breast of every Whig in England? 'Tis liberty to liberty engaged,' that they will defend themselves, their families, and their country. In this great cause they are immovably allied; it is the alliance of God and nature—immutable, eternal—fixed as the firmament of heaven. . . . This wise people speak out. They do not hold the language of slaves. They do not ask you to repeal your laws as a favor. They claim it as a right—they demand it. And I tell you the acts must be repealed. We shall be forced ultimately to retract. Let us retract while we can, not when we must. I say we must necessarily undo these violent, oppressive acts. They must be repealed. You will repeal them. I pledge myself for it that you will, in the end, repeal them.* I stake my reputation on it. I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not finally repealed. Avoid, then, this humiliating, this disgraceful necessity. Every motive of justice and of policy, of dignity and of prudence, urges you to allay the ferment in America by a removal of your troops from Boston, by a repeal of your acts of Parliament."

Let us add to the selections given a single one illus-

* This prediction was fulfilled by the repeal of the acts three years later; when, however, it had become too late.

trating the majestic sweep of the Elizabethan English in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures:

"The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers; Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."—*Nahum* i, 3-7.

Nor may we overlook the grand Christian lyrics, the hymns of the ages. It is true that many devout souls have expressed the heart's devotion in feeble verse, whence many persons have a vague idea that all religious song is marked by literary inferiority. Take, for a single example to the contrary, this triumphant hymn of Dean Henry Alford, learned as he was devout:

"Ten thousand times ten thousand
In sparkling raiment bright
The armies of the ransomed saints
Throng up the steeps of light;
'Tis finished, all is finished,
Their fight with death and sin;
Fling open wide the golden gates,
And let the victors in.

What rush of hallelujahs
Fills all the earth and sky!
What ringing of a thousand harps
Bespeaks the triumph nigh!

O day for which creation
And all its tribes were made!
O joy, for all its former woes
A thousandfold repaid!

Oh, then what raptured greetings
On Canaan's happy shore,
What knitting severed friendships up,
Where partings are no more!"

There is true poetry in such hymns as Faber's "There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;" in Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light;" in Addison's "The spacious firmament on high," and in many another. The great chants and anthems of the church lay a solemn, reverent hush upon the soul. Many of our simplest English hymns have been found so expressive that they have followed the path of English and American missions all around the globe, and been translated into all the languages of the earth. Creeds, indeed, change; theological conceptions change; but it is narrow and petty to reject, because of some theological disagreement, the aspiring trust and longing expressed in the hymn of a soul that mightily believed. We need only to be big enough to draw into our own souls the faith, devotion, love, patience, rapture, triumph, that breathe in the noblest and sweetest Christian lyrics of the ages.

As you read a great poem, oration, drama, history, or essay, the bigness of life grows upon you—the majesty of mighty men and of the administration of nations, the wonderful power of human affection and devotion, courage and resolve, ambition and self-sacrifice. You begin to translate all into terms of the present, and the present grows nobler before your very eyes; undreamed-

of possibilities of grandeur rise upon your thought; you are more because you have felt the magic power of grand and beautiful thought embodied in a noble, flexible, and richly expressive speech.

## CHAPTER III

## THE ENGLISH TREASURY OF WORDS

Critics point out from time to time that English is deficient in the power of composition or combination,—that is, of forming compounds—possessed by some other languages, notably the Greek, Latin and German. It must be admitted that in modern English this power is very limited. English compounds rarely include more than two, or at most, three simple words; as "bluefish", "daylight", "goldenrod", "schoolhouse", "steamboat", "sunbeam". Many of our compounds, too, are unstable forms, the elements spaced off from each other by the hyphen; as "printing-press", "ready-to-wear", "steam-engine", "up-to-date". Words of the latter class vary in form among different writers, dictionaries, and publishing houses, so that one may find "barebacked" or "bare-backed", "fence-corner" or "fence corner", "water-course" or "watercourse", for instance,—according to the judgment or taste of certain authors or publishers. Moreover, it must be admitted, that in this respect, English has lost a power it once had; for the Anglo-Saxon freely made long compounds from native words; as *unanbindendlicum* for "inseparable". For the disappearance of such forms we have to thank the coming in of the Norman-French and the Latin, and later of the Greek, from which sources it has long been the English custom to derive all extensive compounds; instead of working up the native stock for that purpose.

The German has retained this power which the English has lost, and by reason of the strong movement of the nineteenth century for German nationalism, has extended and intensified it. Such words as *Zergliederungskunst* or *Zergliederungswissenschaft* (meaning "anatomy") do not impress the German mind as unreasonably long or complicated. So strong is the tendency of their language to such agglutination that the telegraph companies of Germany have been compelled to take cognizance of it. The thrifty German people quickly saw its possibilities in a message of ten words, and found themselves able to include a considerable treatise within that limit, so that it became necessary to restrict the length of one word to sixteen letters, any combination exceeding that number to be counted as two or more words. The Greek had this power of combination in an unsurpassed degree. For the Greeks it was a necessity, for they had no other cultivated language from which to draw. As culture and science advanced among them they could only meet the new demands by combining the materials they already had, either by joining entire words to each other or attaching to existing words some of their store of prefixes and suffixes, so that each combination should have the effect of a new word. In this they were aided by the remarkable pliability,—what one might almost call the fluidity of their language. They themselves were aware of a possible tendency to excess in this, and their comic poet, Aristophanes, amused himself,—and them—by coining a word of seventy-two syllables!

"Greek has the advantage of combining with extraordinary facility into pronounceable compounds. Its consonants and vowels are not gathered into solid, insoluble lumps, but very

evenly distributed, and upon a page are almost equal in number. This, I think, is the foundation of its excellence.

"The languages of northern Europe abound in undistributed consonants—*strz, ntzsch, ldschm, krzyz.* Hence, in combining several words into a new compound, each part is apt to begin and end with consonants, and the result is such a word as *Gründungsschwindeln* (Ger. 'fraudulent-establishment-of-a-business,' etc.). Compared with such an unwieldy Leviathan the longest term in Greek is a plaything. *Skorodopandokeutriartopolis* (Gr. 'a garlic-bread-selling-hostess') ripples along as pleasantly as a summer brook on a pebbly bed; and the farrago of Aristophanes that contains 169 letters, moves so trippingly on the tongue, that one might dance to it."

—Ramsey, "English Language, etc.," Chap. II, p. 32.

Hence for all extensive compounds, the English language since losing the power to make such for itself, has resorted either to the Latin or to the more pliable Greek; not to mention that many of these forms which we derive from the Latin had come to that language through the Greek. Thus we have the familiar word "aristocracy" (from the Greek *aristos,* "best", plus *krateo,* "rule") meaning "government by the best (in the sense of the chief or leading) citizens"; this could not be translated easily, if at all, by any combination of words from the Anglo-Saxon,—"best-rule", or "chief-rule" would be quite impossible, and would not express the meaning. Even if we could tolerate such nouns, we still could not form an adjective from either, as "best-ruling" or "chief-ruling". The adjective "aristocratic", however, comes ready-made from the Greek, is smooth and easy in sound, and has a definite meaning which every one in the English-speaking world understands; we may, if we prefer, use the form "aristocratical", which is just as smooth in sound, though not so

brief. Then, for an individual, we have the noun "aristocrat", to designate a member of an aristocracy, one of a superior or would-be superior class. In like manner we have "democracy" (from the Greek *demos*, "people", plus *krateo*, "rule") meaning "government by the people", which we could not well express by "people's-rule" or any other native compound; and from this we form in a similar way "democratic" or "democratical", and for an individual, the noun "democrat".

We have done better to borrow. It is almost unnecessary to say that we have derived still more from the Latin than from the Greek,—words of Latin derivation, often through the French, constituting about one-half the number in our dictionaries, though entering in much smaller proportion into common use in our speaking or writing. The words so derived are often not inferior to those from the Greek in ease of utterance and smoothness of sound, even when very long; as "circumnavigate", "degeneration", "immortality", "infinitude", "infinitesimal", "international", "publication", "representatives", "supernatural", "supernumerary", "transsubstantiation".

It is worthy of notice, in connection with this matter, that while we derive "democracy" and "democratic" from the Greek, we obtain "republic" and "republican" from the Latin, and with a difference in sense. The Greek ideal of "democracy",—the people's rule, was that where, as in Athens, all the citizens came together in the Agora or market-place, and voted directly on public measures. The Roman ideal was of the solidity of the State; the "republic" was the *res publica*,—"the public welfare", however secured, which was for the most part, and in their view preferably, through repre-

sentatives, as consuls, tribunes, etc., elected by and acting for the people. Hence "democracy" is a system where every citizen acts directly in the government,—a system only practicable in a small community, as in the old New England "town meeting", or in the small cities of Greece, where each city was a separate and independent state; a system which the modern "initiative and referendum" attempts to carry out on a larger scale. A "republic", on the contrary, is a system where the "public welfare" is sought through the action of representatives chosen by, and supposed to act for the people, —which was the original idea of the constitution of the United States and of each state composing the nation from the beginning. Some of the most difficult problems now disturbing the American people arise from the conflict or attempted adjustment of these two systems. Is our government to be a republic or a democracy, or some possible combination of the two? There is a native English word, "commonwealth", which almost exactly translates the Latin "republic"; this has historic use, for the governmental system of England in Cromwell's day was called a "commonwealth" and the nation was officially designated as the Commonwealth of England. But that government, which was at first that of a parliament without a king, degenerated into a military despotism, and the name became unpopular, though in the oldest of the New England states the governor still closes proclamations with the words, "God bless the Commonwealth of Massachusetts!" Besides, this word, like most Anglo-Saxon words, is more broadly inclusive, and therefore less sharply definite than the words from the Greek and Latin; a despot might claim to be acting for the commonwealth—the public welfare —but scarcely for the republic or the democracy.

It is to be added that our borrowing has come to be largely manufacture, using Greek or Latin elements to form compounds unknown to the Greek or the Latin language. The modern barbarians of the North are treating the ancient languages as the barbarians of old treated the ancient edifices. Because those destroyers of the Roman Empire were not barbarous enough to set men to slaughter each other or to fight with wild beasts in the arena for their amusement, they had no use for the Coliseum which the cultured Romans had built for those gentle pastimes, but viewed it as a most serviceable quarry of ready-hewn stone, from which to take blocks at will for building their own palaces. So we descend upon the ancient classic languages, with the difference that we do not destroy their noble monuments. Homer and Vergil, Demosthenes and Cicero, and all the rest, remain unharmed after we have done our best, or our worst, with their original tongues. Scholars can read their masterpieces still, while we quarry the languages to build new words, such as they would have had to build if they had lived long enough and been inventive enough to know as much as we. It has long been the accepted custom to give Greek names to all new scientific discoveries or mechanical inventions, and the number of Greek compounds so introduced into English is enormous, though Latin terms and elements are still to some extent employed. Our scholars have learned the trick of combining Greek or Latin elements into words describing things the Greeks or Romans never imagined, and the words so formed are as modern and brand-new as the discoveries or inventions they designate. The familiar words, "telegraph", "telegram", "telephone", "phonograph", and "graphophone" are all pure Greek, but all of English manufacture, as the Greeks not only

never had, but never imagined, the things these words denote. Sometimes a mechanic who is not a scholar gets hold of the classics, and forges Greek and Latin together into a single term; as "audiphone" or "dictophone" from the Latin *audio,* "hear", or *dicto,* "speak", combined with the Greek *phonē,* "sound". Sometimes an apprentice gets hold of the classics and produces such monstrosities as we see advertised, containing the word *oxogen,* which is unknown either to Greek or English. (Anyone desiring a clue to the meaning will please look up "oxygen" in any good English dictionary.)

The new art of flying, as at length made possible for man, gives many interesting combinations. Man's first device was to attach himself to an inflated gas-bag, for which a name was obtained from the Italian, "balloon", from the ball-shape which such a bag naturally assumed. But as this could only float and drift, the quest began for a "balloon" that could be propelled, and thus steered or directed, for which was adopted the adjective "dirigible" from the Latin *dirigo,* "direct", and we had the "dirigible balloon," the name of which is now often contracted by making the adjective a noun and calling the conveyance "a dirigible". For the person who navigates the air we went to the Greek and formed the word "aeronaut", from *aer,* "air", and *nautēs,* "sailor", whence we have formed the adjective "aeronautic" and the noun "aeronautics" for the art of air-navigation. In the latter part of the nineteenth century studious men like the Duke of Argyle and Professor Langley, of the Smithsonian Institution, gave practical emphasis to the fact that every bird is heavier than air,—a fact that must have been always known, since a bird that is shot at once falls to the ground, its power

to sustain itself in air being due, not to its lightness, but to its propulsive motion. Then the study came to be to enable man to fly as the bird flies, sustained only by motion, and from the Latin *avis,* "a bird", we formed "aviation" and "aviator". Naturally, "aeronaut" is applied to one who sails in a balloon, or the like, and "aviator" to one who flies like a bird, in a "heavier-than-air" machine. Since such a machine is sustained by planes, we have devised for the form with two planes the all Latin term "biplane" from the Latin *bi.* "two", and *planus,* "flat, level"; while the form with one plane is designated by the hybrid word "monoplane", from the Greek *monos,* "alone, single", plus the Latin *planus.* In pure English we have "air-ship", "air-plane", and "flying-machine", which are good general terms, but not closely descriptive, "air-ship" being commonly applied to the *dirigible balloon,* and "flying-machine" to some conveyance of the *monoplane* or *biplane* class.

In fact it is part of the absorptive power of English, when it has once adopted an element from another language, to fling etymology to the winds, and use that word or element as a native word or formative. Thus we have made the Greek prefix *anti,* "against", so thoroughly our own that we attach it to any word whatever, without a thought of the source from which that other word is derived; we join it with French derivatives, forming "antimason", "antirent", and many others; with Latin derivatives, forming "antiprohibition", "antirepublican", "antislavery", "antisuffrage", "antisuffragist", "antisuffragette", etc.; or with plain Anglo-Saxon words, forming "antiburgher", "antifat", "antitrade", and the like. We even make the prefix an independent noun, and apply it to the opponents

of some well-known policy; as "an anti", or "the antis". The dictionaries insist that this noun-use is colloquial, but the fact that it is colloquial shows the popular sense of complete proprietorship of this ancient Greek preposition as an integral part of English speech. So we join the Latin prefix *ante* "before", with an English noun, forming "anteroom", or with a Greek noun, forming "antestomach". To the Latin prefix *inter,* "between", we add Anglo-Saxon verbs to form "interknit", "interweave", "interwoven", etc. From the Latin *pro,* "for", and *contra,* "against", we have the established English phrase, "the pros and cons", denoting arguments for and against. The Latin *re,* "back, again, over again", is joined with plain Anglo-Saxon forms, making "refit", "renew", "resell", "resold", "retell", "retold", and numerous other familiar compounds. The Latin *sub,* "under", freely unites with any Anglo-Saxon element, forming such words as "subkingdom", "sublet", "subway", "subworker". Similar words are popularly formed at will; as "revamp", "subbasement", "subcellar", etc.

Common usage makes some feeble attempts to classify forms according to derivation; as to restrict the use of *in,* "not", to words of Latin, and of *un,* "not", to those of Anglo-Saxon origin. But *un* long ago overflowed all banks and dams, and may now be found combined with words from the most various sources. We have "incontestable", but "uncontested"; "inconceivable", but "unimagined"; "indeterminable", but "undetermined"; "imperceptible", but "unperceived". Thousands of instances might be given of incongruous elements combined without the slightest reference to their original sources to form English words, and in the majority of instances it must be admitted that they easily

work together. Some have been so long in the language that they could not now be eradicated by any critical force. New ones of the same kind are at once condemned as monstrosities, and compelled to fight their way. It is well that they should be. Let them win their spurs. But if they meet a real popular demand, nothing can keep them out of the language. Probably nothing could now stop the use of the word "monoplane", unless the machine itself should become obsolete. Commercial standing is stronger than scholarly criticism. Just now the most disputed word is "cablegram", which is philologically an abomination, being made from the French-English word *cable* plus the Greek *gram,* clipped from the end of "telegram" or the like. But if the demand of the market is strong enough, "cablegram" will come in, and scholars will be compelled to swallow it, however hard it may go down. At present the tendency seems to be to settle the matter by apocopation, using the brief noun "cable" for the message, as well as for the conductor; as "He sent me a *cable* from Paris". Criticism is the Ellis Island of word-immigrants, where a board of scholars pass upon their claims. If rejected by the board, they still have a special privilege of appeal to a plebiscite of all English-speaking people, and, if accepted there, they may enter in spite of the examining board; otherwise they are deported.

With its readiness to adopt elements or entire words from outside sources, English has now become very intolerant of long home-made forms. It has compared them with the more elegant forms from ancient classic sources, and has found them clumsy. It does not like them. This is partly due, also, to the extremely practical character of the English-speaking peoples. How easily a German may separate the portions of a long

compound we, of course, can not adequately judge; but to us it seems that this must require a distinct mental exertion, which we, as labor-saving people, are unwilling to burden ourselves with, when we can so easily avoid it. We could write "the webperfectingnewspaper-printingpress", but to us this seems ungainly, and it takes us longer to read it. We read much more readily "the web perfecting newspaper-printing-press", and even when we connect some of the words by hyphens, the hyphen marks the joints to the eye, so that we need not hesitate an infinitesimal fraction of a second. We instantly join the thoughts of the associated words into one mental whole, and find mental fusion quicker and easier than typographical confusion.

English-speaking people are always inclined to laugh at a long string of words run together without a break. A foreign compound of this character was recently treated jocosely in a New York newspaper, evoking from an aggrieved native the following rejoinder:

To the Editor of the Evening Sun:

Sir: I can see nothing funny in the name *Dampskibsaktieselskabet.* . . . It is a Danish compound noun, written without hyphens, as is the Danish custom. The German equivalent is *Dampfschiffsaktiengesellschaft. Damp* means "steam"; *skibs,* "ship"; *aktie,* means "issuing stock"; *selskab* means "company" and *et* is a suffix used as the definite article, "the." The whole name means "The Steamship Stock Company," which is not funny at all.

And after reading this sober explanation, the whole thing seems to the English-speaking man funnier than ever. Seriously, the whole explanation above given must be gone through, however swiftly, by the Dane or the German in order to make the idea of either compound clear to his own mind. We, too, could write

"Thesteamshipstockcompany", but should feel ourselves encumbered by so doing, and we find "The steamship stock company" vastly more perspicuous, and conveying to our minds a more truly instantaneous idea.

With lack of the facility of compounding possessed by the Greek, German, Danish, or other languages, English has something better,—an incomparable facility of assimilation. It appropriates words from all lands and ages, as the human body takes into its own substance foods from every realm and clime. Rarely do we think where the viands come from, so long as they taste good. We feel no need to raise oranges, bananas, or spices in our own hothouses. We will let them grow where they are naturally produced, and then send out our ships and bring them in when we want them,—if we want them.

What our language takes it transforms. There is no patching nor pasting on. The process is like that of the physical organism, which transmutes all appropriated food into blood and muscle, flesh and bone, making it its very own. Every foreign applicant for admission must be naturalized, and put on the English dress, before it can be free of the English republic of words. Untransformed words stand timidly on the threshold of our speech, coming in when invited, hat in hand, and with apologetic mien. The pronunciation of the French word *ennui* must be learned by main force, and when that is done, it is hardly worth while, for we have no time nor disposition for the thing. Most of us think we can say *menu,* though very few of us can, and one who should utter it with the true French accent would make himself slightly peculiar by his precision; the word is so far Anglicized that it passes current with a half-French pronunciation; it is still so much of a stranger as to ap-

pear only at the full-dress dinner where even the conversation becomes swallow-tailed; on ordinary occasions we are much more at home with a "bill of fare". "Entente" is another French word that for us is practically unpronounceable; we may have to use it to distinguish the Triple Entente of European powers from the Triple Alliance; but when *entente* is merely a general term for mutual understanding or agreement, the plain English word "understanding" or "agreement" is far preferable. An English paper remarks that "when an Englishman does get a French word or phrase, he immediately thinks it his own", and relates that when French and English sailors were fraternizing in recent maneuvers, an English tar turned to the Frenchman he was entertaining, with the question, "Say, Frenchy, what's the blooming French for 'en'tent cor'dial'?" The French word *débâcle* has long been recognized as English by the dictionaries,—which is well, because when we read in the account of some catastrophe of war that the "retreat became a *débâcle,*" it is convenient to go to the dictionary to learn that *débâcle* in such use is practically equivalent to the familiar English word "rout". So long as a word retains a distinctly foreign type, it is used only apologetically or playfully by real men and women. It is well for a young writer always to avoid a foreign word or phrase for which he can find a good English equivalent. Do not say or write *coup d'œil* when what you mean could be expressed by the single English word "glance", or possibly by the phrase "a sudden glance".

But of foreign words touched by the magic wand of English transformation, there are thousands upon thousands which we use without a thought that they are not native to the soil. Professor Marsh remarks:

"The Anglo-Saxon tongue has a craving appetite, and is as rapacious of words and as tolerant of forms as are its children of territory and religions. . . . The multifarious etymology of our Babylonish dialect, and the composite structure of our syntax are peculiarities of the English tongue not shared in equal degree by any European speech known in literature."

This would seem to be a natural result of the historic evolution of English speech. From the Anglo-Saxon conquest, through nearly fifteen hundred years, not one language or dialect planted on British soil has ever been allowed to attain completion by the development of its own inherent resources. Each has been compelled to fight its way, and to hold what at last it held as the result of concession and compromise, supplying its own deficiencies, not by internal development, but by free borrowing or unwilling acceptance of supplies from some contesting language. Especially was this the case after so large a part of the Anglo-Saxon speech perished in the two centuries following the Norman conquest, when the Saxons supplied the lack by wholesale appropriation of words from the language of their conquerors, reshaped into conformity with their own. From that time on, when a word was wanted, nothing seemed so natural as to take it from some source where it might be found existing. This has long been the settled habit of the English language, and has become so much a matter of course as seldom to excite remark. The language has gone on advancing, gathering into itself from every source words to express all the advance of discovery and science, until its words already number more than 400,000, and still there is no limit in sight. If there shall be found to-morrow in any language a good word that we have not for any idea we care to express, we

shall not be downcast over our own lack of originality, but shall exult in our new range of discovery; we will instantly adopt that word, and be so much the richer. Wherever any people has invented or shall invent any word for anything that we care to name, that word is ours for the taking.

In this is a marvelous advantage. Instead of painfully piling home-grown syllables upon each other or jamming words together under hydraulic pressure of thought, we may simply reach out and raid the universe of speech, and our captures from all ages and nations settle peacefully side by side, while English rejoices in the garnered riches of the past and present of all the world. Some objector may say, "You are, in very deed, the lineal descendants of the Saxon and Norman pirates of the North Sea, actually delighting in triumphant linguistic piracy". Call it so, if you will. We are not worried. We accept Dryden's defense in his "Discourse of Epick Poetry", in reply to the charge that he "Latinized too much":

"It is true that when I find an English word significant and sounding, I neither borrow from the Latin nor any other language; but when I want at home I must seek abroad. If sounding words are not of our growth and manufacture, who shall hinder me to import them from a foreign country? I carry not out the treasure of the nation which is never to return; but what I bring from Italy I spend in England; here it remains, and here it circulates; if the coin be good, it will pass from one hand to another. I trade both with the living and the dead for the enrichment of our native language. We have enough in England to supply our necessity; but if we will have things of magnificence and splendor, we must get them by commerce. . . . Therefore, if I find a word in a classic author, I propose it to be naturalized by using it myself, and if the public approve of it the bill passes."

We rob no one. The words we take we leave still existing in their native speech, while we give them a wider range, and often uplift them into grander companionship. We are horticulturists, rather than pirates, setting choice scions from all far lands in our native speech and gladdening new lands and generations with their fruits. By all this we have gained more than we have lost. We can well afford to give up the power of combination for the greater power of limitless appropriation. The resources of the English vocabulary are to be measured only by the riches of all the languages of the nations.

## CHAPTER IV

## A WORLD-LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Words, indeed, we shall be told, are only the means of expressing thought, the currency by which mental wealth is passed from mind to mind. However rich its vocabulary, what has English to offer in stores of thought itself? Of its rich literature something has already been said. "But," urges the objector, "when you have told the utmost of the excellence of its literature, English is still a very limited language. It has not the poetry, philosophy, history, or oratory of Greece and Rome, the deep reasoning and mystic contemplation of the Orient, the literary treasures of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, nor the newly awakened thought of Russia, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. English may do very well for those who can not have more. But it is, after all, exceedingly modern, and off at one side of the world. Much of the world's best thought is inaccessible in English."

On the contrary, nothing is more remarkable in English than its greediness in translation. Just as English and American explorers, travelers, merchants, missionaries, and conquerors have been driven on by the passion of exploration and discovery to sail every strip of water where a ship could float, and to tread every land where there is room for man to set his foot, so their eager scholars have gone out into every field of human thought, ancient or modern, of all the world, and as soon as they have mastered any worthy writing of any

age or clime, have been unable to rest in their own achievement, but have been impelled by a consuming passion to render whatever they have found of value into English. Just as their discoverers plant on any new shore the British or the American flag, so every master of any piece of foreign work or of ancient history or scholarship promptly raises over it the standard of the English speech. Their patriotism is racial or linguistic; the English language is their fatherland of thought. They are harking back to the beloved and honored millions who can not read the hieroglyphics or the papyrus, the Greek, Latin, Persian, or Sanskrit, the Italian, Spanish, French, German or Russian, and for their sake they are determined, that, if the thing is really good, not a moment shall be lost in annexing it to the English-speaking domain. Their linguistic patriotism is aided by the widespread popular education in the English-speaking lands that insures a great reading public ready to welcome and applaud any new contribution to the sum of human thought; and so strong is the home-loving instinct of the race that the applause and appreciation of that home public are dearer to the heart than the praise of all the world besides.

It is true, there is a superstition against translations, and, like all other superstitions, this has behind it a certain amount of truth. The universities have done much to foster it. There is no wonder that a professor who is an accomplished scholar in Greek or Latin, French, German, or Italian should look with aversion or even with contempt upon any translation of the works he reads with delight in the original. To him the best version seems hard, stiff, and wooden. The students catch his feeling, which in them becomes the conceit that they will not be wise by translations, when they can not be

otherwise. For, with the exception of some who are specializing in some foreign language, few of them can read, and practically none of them do read, any foreign work outside the classroom. "What do you think of Plato's 'Phædo'?" Fine thing, no doubt. Haven't read it. It's not in our course." "But you can get it in English." "Oh, translations are such wretched things!" "Why not read it in the original?" "Haven't time. Takes too long to bone out the Greek." So you may go down the line of the world's best literature in the dead or foreign languages, and you will find that—always with the exception of the studious few—students go through the precious four years of learned leisure without reading a page of any of those great works beyond what are formally included in the curriculum. And after graduation? Then you may be very sure you will not "catch them" meddling with any such materials. Then it is often true that they literally "have not time." This condition of things should somehow be bettered.

Beyond question there is much in any vivid or vigorous work in one language that can not be carried over into another, any more than the perfume of a flower can be transferred to the most exquisite painting. Hence, every translation must be, to some degree, imperfect. In numberless instances a word of one language does not exactly overlap its nearest equivalent in another. The word the translator must use in his version may be stronger or weaker than the corresponding word in the original, causing his rendering to seem either violent or feeble. The word in the original may be picturesque, and the corresponding word in the new language prosaic, or in some other way there may be lack of fitness. It is often as if a workman had to build

a wall with bricks of different measure, and here and there to fit in a piece of flat or curved tile; it may take much extraneous mortar to cover the joining. The "local color,"—the characteristics of place and period —is, for the most part, non-transferable. We can not translate Homer into English without loss, nor could we render Shakespeare into Greek without loss—and probably greater loss. English can not adequately translate Dante's Italian, because England never had the experience of Dante's Italy. The deadly feuds and battles, the hostile fortifications of private individuals within a civilized city, are foreign to our thought. We look with amazement to-day upon the medieval Italian palaces, with their narrow, grated windows opening on the street, and their curved rows of spikes aloft on the corners to hold the heads of enemies slaughtered in private war. The Wars of the Roses are not a parallel, for, however personal the strife, all the individuals of each faction claimed to be fighting England's battles. We can scarcely conceive of cities conducting formal "war" against other cities a dozen miles away. English cities have many times been in conflict, but only as centers of some greater struggle, as when Charles I had his headquarters at Oxford and the Parliamentary army in London. The war, however, was not between Oxford and London, but between the king and the parliament of all England. Above all, England has never known a state of hopeless and chronic subjugation by any endless succession of conquerors, so that the only question of the common people could be what new master they should be compelled to obey, or when, or for how long. England has occasionally had mercenary soldiers, ready to serve upon any side in any cause for pay, and for whom she must borrow the Italian

name of *condottieri*. On the other hand, England has never had the sunny climate and the beautiful land, "the fatal dower of beauty," the music, the art, nor the ancient civilization of Italy. Hence, Italian words and forms of speech often carry, deep embedded in their substance, a something which English forms can not fully render. Doubtless the Italian would find itself seriously limited in the attempt to express the soaring, expansive freedom of Milton's verse. The same is substantially true of any two languages of any period. Neither can exactly fit into the mold of the other.

The case is worst in poetry, because there, if the translator attempts to translate into English verse, he is hampered by necessities of rime or meter, or both. Often he must sacrifice the thought of the original in order to get an English verse that can at all be read. There are foreign meters that the English language simply will not adopt. They are too foreign to its type ever to become popular. There is the hexameter of the Greek and Latin poets,—the six-foot verse of the Iliad and Odyssey and of Vergil's Æneid. That this can be made poetic in English, Longfellow and Bryant have demonstrated. But it remains true that the English language does not take kindly to it. Take the first line of Longfellow's beautiful "Evangeline,"

"In the Acadian land, on the shores of the Basin of Minas."

This is musical, but the movement is slow. There are in the line 12 words and 17 syllables, which would suffice for a tolerably long English sentence. Thus, the sentence, "I will not be cheated out of my inheritance by such base methods," contains 12 words and 17 syllables, and makes a complete and somewhat extended statement; but in Longfellow's line of the same number

of words and syllables we have only the introductory clause of a still incomplete sentence, which it requires a line and a half more to finish. English words are so largely monosyllabic or dissyllabic that the hexameter line holds too many, and the verse seems heavy. If anything sudden, impetuous, or thrilling, is to be told, the action seems impeded by the verse. It will answer for a contemplative, descriptive poem like the "Evangeline," though even there the excitement of the captured men in the church and the sudden partings and embarkation at the seashore lack vividness, because the verse lingers in the telling. Vivid or vigorous action demands in English a shorter measure. Hence, the five-foot line, with two syllables in each foot, and the accent thrown forward to the second of each two syllables—the Iambic pentameter—is the favorite English heroic verse, the meter of Milton's "Paradise Lost"; as,

> So started up in his true shape the fiend;
> Back stepped those two fair angels, half amazed.

Pope cast aside all trammels of the original, adopted the five-foot rimed heroic verse, and sacrificed the Greek where necessary to make stirring and readable English poems. He did what he undertook to do, producing a translation of which it has been said, "It is magnificent, but it is not Homer." Yet Pope does tell the essential story, and his are the most popular of all translations of the Homeric poems.

Such are some of the difficulties that beset poetic translation. The tendency now is to prefer the best literal prose translations of the Homeric poems, as those of Lang and Leaf, where, with no limitations of rime or meter, the story and the illustrations and descriptions are accurately and often beautifully given. It is not to

be expected that a thorough Greek scholar will be satisfied with either.

But what are the rest of us to do? How many languages can we know well enough for enjoyable reading? It is not a question of smattering. Rapidity is important if one is to read more than a very few books,—if he is to have freedom, range, and outlook. Appreciation is necessary in order to make it worth while to read at all. If he is not getting the meaning fully and accurately and with broad and helpful comprehension of the work as a whole in the original, he had better read a good translation.

For it is to be remembered that until he knows a language so as to think in it, he himself is only translating when he reads it. Now many approved printed translations have been made by some one who knows the foreign language well, and has made some special study of the author whose work he renders. If you know the language but slightly, you are getting in your own reading only the translation of an amateur, which is quite sure to be inferior to that of an expert. It is a piece of very considerable self-conceit for the callow student who can only hammer out a language with grammar and dictionary to look with contempt on the best work of a specialist in that language because it is "only a translation."

The average college graduate may apply this test to himself: Would you be willing to translate at sight some passage from an unfamiliar Greek or Latin classic, and go into print with that translation over your own name? If you would not look it up first in some approved translation, or at least do some careful work with a Greek or Latin dictionary, you are more than an average college graduate.

But the average college graduate is more to be pitied than blamed. From the time when he plowed through Vergil and Cicero in the high school, he has been forced to treat the classic authors simply as exercises in etymology. In old time the classics were endeared to the schoolboy by sound floggings, and in more recent times by "keeping after school." The school-teachers, and later, the college professors, all go on the assumption that every one of these students is to be made an etymologist,—when not one in a thousand could be if he would, or would be if he could. Hence, they must go into the garden plot of one of Vergil's most beautiful descriptions, and pull up every word by the roots to see what it is made of. They must massacre every line of Homer, till the slaughter of Greeks and Trojans becomes a negligible quantity. If by any chance a student is caught feeling any real interest in a passage, he is dragged through some wire-fences of syntax or some underbrush of Doric or Æolic variants, till not only the conceit is taken out of him, but also all interest in the author's thought. There has been nothing like it since the legendary Puritan days when misbehaving children were set to read the Bible as a punishment. We know one boy who was kept two hours after school because he was indiscreet enough to see the joke in a story in his German reader and to laugh at it. The victims estimate their progress as convicts their sentence, not by what they have accomplished, but by what they still "have got to read." The system is venerable by its antiquity, and has abundant British precedent. It is objectionable chiefly because it does not teach the languages to which it is applied, and does make the authors who have written in them detested.

A graduate goes to a hotel on the Continent of Europe,

and finds the proprietor able to converse with him in English, and at intervals with another guest in German, give directions to his servants in Italian, while writing, as opportunity allows, a letter in French. The helpless graduate says wrathfully to himself, "I have spent my best years since I was thirteen studying Latin and Greek and some modern languages. I have at least average ability, and have been fairly industrious, yet I could not carry on an intelligent conversation or write a respectable letter in any language except my own if my life depended upon it. I do not know whether this man could 'pass' one of our examinations, but he does know what languages are for, and can use them effectively." The same traveler finds the "English" hotels full of educated Britons and Americans as helpless as himself. He sees a college president try in vain to talk with a child in French, while a traveler of far inferior scholarship falls into easy conversation with the little one, and he feels that scholarship has somehow missed its mark.

A few scholars survive even the school and university system. But even these, when they get out into the work of modern life, are hard driven by the exactions of their calling, and find the dead languages becoming ever deader, while even the living ones grow coy and shy. You go to see a friend off on a French steamer. The steward doesn't understand plain English, and you meditate a sentence in French, but, before you can get it constructed, the march of events has carried you to the next deck—a lack of readiness which discourages conversation. The same hesitancy hampers you if you sit down to read a classic in a language other than your own, and the reading goes like a dinner where you have to wait for each dish to be separately cooked and served.

If you find a man who can read one day in Latin, the next in Greek, then in French, German, and Italian, and another day in Spanish, with enjoyment of his various authors and clear comprehension of their meaning, you have found a man of very unusual attainments, and he is practically certain to be a man of letters, not actively engaged in business, politics, or professional life. Gladstone, indeed, could study Homer for recreation in the intervals of official activity; Macaulay did not think it necessary to translate the Italian quotations in his Essays, supposing apparently that "every schoolboy" could read them at sight. There are a few—a very few—such men in every generation. Any such accomplished scholar may be summarily dismissed from our consideration here. He will take care of himself. General rules are not for him. If he dismisses us from consideration we will bear that as best we may. Business men, clerks, stenographers, editors, lawyers, doctors, and ministers who are crowded with daily work, and only able to read by snatches, can not keep his pace. But these are the very ones we care most for, and the only ones who need our consideration. For them the question returns, Is every man or woman who can read nothing but English to be shut out of everything not originally written in English, because it is "unscholarly" to read a translation?

Here we would say, by way of precaution, that it is eminently desirable for every one who has the opportunity to know at least one language besides his own. By that he will better understand his own. The case is that of the "me" and "not me" of psychology. As beautifully stated by Tennyson:*

* "In Memoriam," xlv. [Strahan, London, 1872.]

"The baby new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that 'this is I':

But as he grows he gathers much
And learns the use of 'I' and 'me,'
And finds 'I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.'"

We understand ourselves better, and perhaps only understand ourselves, by coming into contact with what is not ourselves. This is the good of travel, the good of the varying demands of business, that the "me" has to be perpetually measured against some new form of the "not me." Hence it is that the man who stands all day at one punching machine, the woman who takes sheets all day long off one folder in the printing office, or the theorist who sits all day at one desk arranging the universe, tends to become what we call narrow-minded. The mind of such a person does not expand with any symmetry for want of being called out in various directions to act upon or resist things that are not itself. Thus the objection to Adam Smith's explanation of the wonderful dexterity to be gained in making pin-heads by the man who does nothing else is well taken,—that the man who spends all his days from morning to night in making pin-heads will come to have nothing but a pin-head himself!

A new language tends to break up all narrow exclusiveness. It compels you to compare notes with thinkers who have cast their thoughts in a different mold. This is a great mental advantage; but if your study-time is limited, do not try to learn too many languages; it is better to be comfortable and efficient in one foreign language than helpless and tormented in six.

Yet, even in your new language, do not be afraid of English translations. The inductive method of some schoolbooks starts the learner with an interlinear English translation at the outset. Good scholars recommend the learner to read the Scriptures in the new language, because a thought that has become familiar in his own tongue will help him to approach the words of another; and this process is found to be not less, but more, devotional, for the passage which has become so familiar in his own language that he may read it as he drinks water, without tasting it, gains new thought and meaning when he is compelled to pause on the words of a new language. In reading other books in a foreign language, do not fear to keep a good translation beside you and turn to it whenever you strike a snag. When you reach clear water again, go on with the original as far as your sailing powers will carry you. Then refer at pleasure to your translation for guidance and comparison. You will get the author's thought more rapidly, and so be in more sympathy with his spirit, as you are able to read freely and easily. You will learn many words by simple absorption, by context and derived thought, just as a child learns them—and the words will be more alive than the same words in a dictionary. A child must learn a language before he can use a dictionary. How he can do it, starting with absolutely nothing, is one of the mysteries of human existence. There is no better way to enter the kingdom of a foreign language than to become as a little child.

"Yet how would this work in a school or college?" Exceedingly well, we think. If you are a teacher, say to your students, "I do not care how many translations you use, or who helps you outside the classroom. The one thing is that you know the language. Whether

you do that or not, I can quickly discover in your recitation; and whatever helps you really to know a language you are welcome to use. The more you know of the language before you come into class, the more time we shall have for the author's thought and style." If you make your students really interested in the thought of a foreign author, they will learn more of the foreign language than could be drilled into them or extorted from them by any other process.

The average college graduate will get more from Jowett's translation of Plato, or Coleridge's translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein," or Longfellow's translation of Dante, than from his own; and the mere English reader who knows neither Greek, German, nor Italian will get more from any one of the three works named than the imperfect scholar will get by reading the original. Let the student with an imperfect knowledge of a foreign tongue aid himself by the translation, and let the English reader rely confidently upon the translation.

We want the best thoughts of the master-minds of all lands and all time to broaden and exalt our own. If we can read them in the languages in which they were written, very well. If not, let us go for them, and go for them very strongly and heartily, in the best attainable English translations.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, himself no mean scholar, writes (Italics ours): *

"The respectable and sometimes excellent translations of Bohn's Library have done for literature what railroads have done for internal intercourse. I do not hesitate to read all the books I have named, and all good books, in translations.

* "Society and Solitude," Books and Reading.

*What is really best in any book is translatable,*—any real insight or broad human sentiment. Nay, I observe that in our Bible, and other books of lofty moral tone, it seems easy and inevitable to render the rhythm and music of the original into phrases of equal melody. . . . I rarely read any Latin, Greek, German, Italian, sometimes not a French book, in the original, which I can procure in a good version. I like to be beholden to the great metropolitan English speech, the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven. I should as soon think of swimming across Charles River when I wish to go to Boston, as of reading all my books in originals when I have them rendered for me in my mother-tongue."

Dr. W. C. Wilkinson remarks: *

"Goethe was before Emerson in standing up strong for translation, maintaining that the essence, the substance, of any literary work is quite capable of being translated from language to language."

Emerson's illustration of the English translation of the Scriptures is peculiarly happy. We catch the spiritual glory of the Hebrew poetry in the rapt visions of Isaiah, the pleadings, the exalted faith, the ascriptions of praise of the Psalms; and we feel a difference in the language—not merely in the thought—when we turn to the simple narratives of the Gospels or the didactic style of the Epistles. Nor only so; we seem to catch a transition of style in passing from the Old Testament narratives, like the story of Joseph, to the New Testament narratives, like the account of the Transfiguration or the parable of the Good Samaritan; and it seems not fanciful to think that the style of the translators was insensibly influenced by the unlikeness of the Greek and the Hebrew idiom, each of which they caught by a

* "The Good of Life," Goethe's "Faust," p. 319.

fine, scholarly instinct, and expressed vividly in the sensitive English.

And it is not amiss to remark at this point that the entire faith of Christendom is based upon translations. The Latin Vulgate, which was for centuries the only Bible of western Europe, is a translation from the Greek and Hebrew. Though the Greek Church may use the New Testament in the original Greek, its Old Testament is the Septuagint, a Greek translation from the original Hebrew. If, as many scholars believe, and as some passages of the Gospels seem to indicate, Jesus commonly spoke Aramaic, the dialectical Hebrew of Palestine, we have in the Greek Testament itself only translations of the very utterances of the Founder of the Christian faith. By translations the Bible has gone round the world, producing in the Orient, in Africa, and in the islands of the sea an essential unity of Christian faith. No more stupendous spiritual force has ever been exerted upon earth than that of the translations of the Scriptures.

So, too, Emerson's remark that "Whatever is really best in any book is translatable," is one of his crucial sayings that justifies itself. Something of form, and of what we might call flavor, we must lose, but the essence, the gist—if there is any—can be carried over. The converse is equally true, that whatever is worst in any book is translatable, though translators often show an aversion, which must be commended, to doing it. If a book in a translation is utterly empty and stupid, it is empty and stupid in the original. The translator did not put the emptiness in; rather you may be sure he did his best to fill the vacuum. If a book is mean and wretched in translation, it is mean and wretched in the original. Thus Jeffrey said of Goethe's "Wilhelm

Meister," "This book could not have been written in English," and with his Scotch directness and courage gives literal translations of some passages, of which we might say that they could not now be printed in English. They were and are just as bad in the German, though the foreign language often acts as a kind of veil or disguise to screen the full atrocity from the English reader of the original. It is very safe to say that what will not bear full translation into English is not fit to read in any language—unless when the historian or scholar is reading, as a physician investigates, to understand the diseases of the world. Fortunately, the English reader will have little of this obtruded upon him. English translators have, for the most part, been persons of clear judgment and good taste, and English and American publishers have had, on the whole, a sound judgment of what the reading public of the English-speaking world would bear. Rather they have given us a glorious accumulation of all that is grand, beautiful, and good in all the languages of the earth.

So considered, we view our English privileges with wonder and delight.

Do you care for Homer or Vergil, for Demosthenes or Cicero, for Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, or Tacitus, or Plutarch, for Aristotle, Plato, or Xenophon, for Æschylus, Euripides, or Sophocles, for Aristophanes, Ovid, or Juvenal, for the fables of Æsop or The Arabian Nights Entertainments, for Cervantes' "Don Quixote" or the "Chronicle of the Cid," for Dante or Petrarch or Boccaccio or Ariosto, for Kepler or Leibnitz or Fichte or Kant or Descartes, for Spinoza or Swedenborg, for Goethe or Schiller or Lessing, for Fénelon or Bossuet, Malebranche or Pascal, for Molière, Voltaire, or Rousseau, for Dumas, Balzac, or Victor Hugo, for Ibsen or

Tolstoi, or a thousand others? You may read them all in the language in which you read your morning paper. Are you interested to know about the Vedas or the Eddas or the Zend Avesta? You may read all that is most important of them in English. Would you learn what Mohammed really taught? There is an English translation of the Koran. Do you wish to understand the teaching of Buddhism? Many admirable and learned English works will give you translations and digests of the chief monuments of that faith. Scholarly translations of the texts and classics of Confucianism are easily accessible in English. You may read in English the songs of the Troubadours, the inscriptions on the bricks and clay cylinders of Babylon and Nineveh, or the hieroglyphics on the tombs and pyramids of Egypt. Of modern works, anything that commands wide attention is almost instantly rendered into English. The chances are that an English translation will be published in England or America simultaneously with the appearance of the original in its own country. Through our native language we may keep our finger on the pulse of all the world. By its facility and felicity of translation, its power to express the essential thought of any writing produced in any language, English has become the Pentecost of the nations, so that their utterances in every variety of human speech we may hear "every man in our own tongue wherein we were born."

That this is no rhetorical rapture the following incident will show: A young minister had failed of a college education because of the belief that he must lose not a moment in going to men with the Christian message—"to preach the gospel." Later, as he came to see how much that gospel message involved, he was

aware that he had made a mistake, which it was then too late to correct. What could he do? He resolved, "I will study, as far as I can reach it in English, the best of all that college men learn, so that when I meet a college man I shall know something of the best of all he knows, and be able to converse with him intelligently." Right there he began a course of self-education which has placed him among the scholarly men of the world. That man was the one now honored as Bishop Vincent, who told this story of his own youth at the great Chautauqua which he founded, and whose Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Association has opened the treasures of learning through the English tongue to thousands of readers, young and old, in homes, on farms, in factories and offices, all over the English-speaking world. In his own person, and through the great society he has founded, he has demonstrated that the essentials of a liberal education may be secured by any industrious student by means of the English language alone.

The scholar and the university should be in full sympathy with such wide dissemination of the best results of university training through the medium of the "cosmopolitan English speech" accessible to all our people. The desirability of such wide diffusion of learning was well stated by President Hibben of Princeton University in a noble address recently given before the Brooklyn Institute of Fine Arts on "The Functions of the University in America," as follows:

"The world is coming into possession of a greater mass of knowledge than ever before, a knowledge of a peculiar kind—that which gives a man a more intimate knowledge of himself, of the conditions of his life, of the relations which he sustains, and of the obligations which rest upon

him as a son, father, neighbor, friend, and citizen—a knowledge which, if properly apprehended and properly applied, will tend, not merely to preserve human life, but to enrich and ennoble it. This human knowledge must be both gained and augmented by university investigation and reach, and it is incumbent upon the university also to cause this knowledge to be diffused as widely as possible, so that it may become the free possession of the many, and not the hidden secret of the few. The university, not merely through its teaching body, but through the men whom it is yearly equipping and sending forth into the work of the world, must be able to interpret this knowledge, to simplify it, and to express it in terms which the multitude will be able to understand and use."

## CHAPTER V

## ENGLISH SYNONYMS—THEIR ABUNDANCE AND HELPFULNESS

The word *synonym* is from the Greek, a compound of *syn-* (or *sun-*), meaning "with" or "together," and *onoma,* "name," and is applied to any one of two or more words that "name together,"—fellow-names for the same thing. We might call a pair of synonyms in English "twin-names" for one meaning. From this we have the adjective *synonymous,* which in strictness signifies "equivalent in meaning;" but the adjective *synonymous* holds more strictly to the original meaning than the noun *synonym.* Most people know that if you say one word is a *synonym* of another, it may not mean exactly the same thing. If you say the words are *synonymous,* on the other hand, they then feel that you mean they are identical.

As a matter of fact, it is very rare to find any two words that have precisely the same meaning so as to be always interchangeable. There is almost always a difference either in meaning or in use. You will find many words that you can not discriminate in meaning by the dictionary, but the moment you attempt to use them you will see you can use one in some connections, while in others you must not employ it. Take the two verbs *begin* and *commence,* with their nouns, *beginning* and *commencement.* Their meaning seems at first sight to be identical. We may say, "The service will *com-*

*mence* at 8 o'clock", or "The service will *begin* at 8 o'clock," and there is no perceptible difference between these two statements. We may say, "This was the *beginning* or this was the *commencement* of the enterprise—of the hostilities." But we soon became aware of a certain formality about *commencement* that is not in *beginning*. Take the opening verse of Mark's gospel: "The *beginning* of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God." We should weaken it indescribably if we were to make it read—"The *commencement* of the gospel of Jesus Christ." We should lose the plain simplicity of the Anglo-Saxon in the literary formality of the Latin. Still more would this be true of the first verse of Genesis, if we were to change "In the *beginning* God created the heaven and the earth"; to read—"In the *commencement* God created the heaven and the earth." On the other hand, take the common expression for graduation day,—the college *commencement*,—and how strange it would seem to speak of the *beginning* of the college. We should think that it meant its historical origin. It would not even mean the same thing as now, the *commencement*, of course, meaning the day on which the graduates *commence* their graduate life, *commence* their course as Bachelors of Arts, for instance. Perhaps there are no other two words in the language that have so little difference between them, and yet even these are not always interchangeable.

The English language is peculiarly rich in synonyms, as with such a history it could not fail to be. From the fall of the Roman Empire, Britons, Jutes, Angles, Saxons, Danes, Northmen, and Normans, fighting, fortifying, and settling upon the soil of England, and all fenced in together by the sea, could not but influence one another's speech. English merchants, soldiers, sail-

ors, and travelers, trading, warring, and exploring in every clime, of necessity brought back new terms of sea and shore, of shop and camp and battle-field. English scholars have studied Greek and Latin for a thousand years, and the languages of the Continent and of the Orient in more recent times. English churchmen have introduced words from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, through Bible and prayer-book, sermon, and tract. From all this it results that there is scarcely a language ever spoken among men that has not some representative in English speech. Often words derived from two or more sources would be equivalent in meaning, and for a while these equivalent words would dwell side by side, and be used indiscriminately and quite at random for the same thing.

Then thoughtful English people would come to inquire, what is the use of having several words for one thing. After that,—as any object or idea may be viewed in various aspects,—one of these words would be seen to have one aspect and another word to have another, while all of them, differing in particulars, have one common ground. They may be compared to streams which for part of their course blend their waters into one, while above their confluence each flows independently as a separate river, under its own distinctive name. So with a group of synonyms, you will find there is a certain ground which they cover, where they are practically identical, and within this common territory they may be used interchangeably; and you will find there is a certain line of meaning or of usage for each, where it differs from the other or others, and demands distinctive use. Hence arises the wonderful power of our language to exhibit almost any idea in various lights, as by the gem-cutter a single diamond can be

made to reveal the light in ever-varying gleams from its numerous facets.

Thus the field of choice is very wide. This will appear from the following list of words taken at random, for which synonyms have been enumerated as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| beautiful, 17 | candid, 20 | poverty, 10 |
| beginning, 14 | fickle, 25 | power, 28 |
| benevolence, 16 | hatred, 20 | renounce, 15 |
| bright, 31 | hinder, 27 | wealth, 20 |

These numbers may be made a trifle more or less, according to the methods of enumeration of different authors. For the word *pure* there are thirty-seven synonyms, as follows:

absolute, chaste, classic, classical, clean, clear, continent, fair, genuine, guileless, guiltless, holy, immaculate, incorrupt, innocent, mere, perfect, real, sheer, simple, spotless, stainless, true, unadulterated, unblemished, uncorrupted, undefiled, unmingled, unmixed, unpolluted, unspotted, unstained, unsullied, untainted, untarnished, upright, virtuous.

One of the first things for every young speaker or writer to do is to make it clear to himself that

THERE ARE SYNONYMS.

He is, in all probability, using the same word much too frequently, consciously or unconsciously. Thus "great" is a very excellent and valuable word, but it becomes to some writers the only term to express any idea of magnitude whatever, as in the following:

"We were *greatly* surprised to see so *great* a crowd of people assembled, evidently for some *great* occasion. On inquiry we learned that a *great* man was to address the people on a subject of *great* interest. The *great* size of the field, which sloped like an amphitheater, enabled the *great* crowd to hear every word with *great* ease, and all listened with *great* attention to the *great* thoughts presented."

That is perfectly correct English. *Great* is used correctly in every one of these phrases, and yet you see how ruinous the effect of the repetition is to the passage. That is but a slight exaggeration of the style into which some writers fall, and from which they seem unable to get out. The way out is by the path of synonyms. Let us take the specimen just given and see what synonyms will do for it.

"We were *much* surprised to see so *large* a number of people assembled, evidently for some *important* occasion. On inquiry we learned that an *eminent* man was to address the people on a subject of *especial* interest. The *ample* size of the field, which sloped like an amphitheater, enabled the *vast* crowd to hear every word with *perfect* ease, and all listened with the *utmost* attention to the *noble* thoughts presented."

That is at least readable. It would answer for a description that could be either spoken or printed, in place of the other, which would be intolerable either in speaking or writing. The pitiful repetition with which many persons use such words as *elegant, splendid, clever, awful, horrid,* etc., to indicate—for they can not be said to express—almost any shade of approved or objectionable qualities, shows a poverty of language which it is of the first importance to correct. It would be well for every young writer to ask himself, or ask some judicious friend, from time to time,—"Am I using any one word too much?" "Have I used any word repetitiously in this article or in this paragraph?" If you find yourself harping on one string, then from the abundant synonyms of our language, restring your lyre, and bring out the various tones in rich and pleasing harmony. In revising any article of your own, look through it for repetition, as for an intruder or a blemish. And, whenever

any word appears too often, say to yourself, A substitute for that repeated word can be and shall be found. Then set to work to find it.

### Synonyms as Interchangeable

The numerous synonyms that are interchangeable are of especial value in contributing to excellence of style. For this purpose they supply:

1. Variety.—Avoidance of repetition is a worthy aim. The hearer or reader instinctively feels, when the same word returns, that the same thought is coming back. He seems to be listening to a thrice-told tale, and getting nowhere. The innate instinct of progress makes the mind resent even the suggestion of being dragged back and forth over the same ground.

There is a vicious tendency, which sometimes overcomes even the practised speaker or writer, to use an expression merely because he has used it shortly before. The explanation of this is that every mental activity may be said, roughly speaking, to cut a groove in the brain, and the easiest thing for any subsequent mental activity to do is to follow that groove, as the line of least resistance. But that is precisely what we do not want. Great things are seldom done or said in the line of least resistance, but rather by the power of an aroused mind to resist inertia, to act with new initiative, to strike out, invent, discover, originate. Following a previous track of thought is the result of mental indolence, while really worthy work requires that the mind be alert, energetic, active, eager, intense. Repetitiousness is thus usually a sign of mental drowsiness or drifting.

Beware of favorite words. Often the best evidence that a word is wrong on the present occasion is that it was right on some quite different occasion. Physicians

come to be much afraid of the survival of their own prescriptions, as they find a patient taking, or—still worse—administering to others, for a sore throat a remedy that was originally successful in curing indigestion. A favorite or habitual word is quite sure to be, in the majority of cases, misused. Every little while an admired author or popular orator employs some word so aptly that it fixes itself in the public mind, and after that everybody uses it, on every occasion where it can possibly be brought in. At one period the word was *permeate,* "to be thoroughly diffused through, pervade, saturate," and everything was *permeated* by some essence or influence. At a later time *trend*—which fitly describes some vast, slow geologic movement—was the favorite. Everything had a *trend.* Buying stocks on the wrong side of the market had a *trend* toward the bankruptcy which was its swift and sure result. Later, *meticulous* was felt to have a fine, cryptic, and dainty significance, and no article was complete which did not contain some *meticulous* distinction or suggestion. The European war brought in *camouflage* as fascinatingly descriptive, but that swiftly lost its charm by excessive use. If you have a favorite word, be sure not to use that word, except when you can not help it. Then, on some occasion when it is the very best word to use, that shop-worn term will become new, even to yourself, by its happy appropriateness.

There is a special danger of repetition of the common words, the supposedly "simple" words, because they include so many meanings. Dictionary-makers find those the very hardest to define. It is easy to give a definition of *arterio-sclerosis,* because that means just one thing, and when you have told that one thing, your definition is done. But the so-called "simple" words,—

the "easy words,"—are mostly from the Anglo-Saxon, and the Anglo-Saxon mind dealt in the concrete. It used short, forceful words for great masses of meaning, trusting hearers or readers to pick out the sense required in any particular case, when the time came. Whatever was desirable in any one of a thousand ways was *good*. Whatever was not *good* was *bad*. Why worry over fine distinctions? So our children largely think and speak to-day. Hence their language is predominantly Anglo-Saxon. But the world has grown up. The orator or author addresses a constituency that has advanced far beyond that early simplicity, and if he would meet the needs of the time that now is, he must use a store of special and distinctive words, such as the Anglo-Saxons would have had to invent if they had lived and progressed without any Norman invasion.

Take the little word *give*. We say that is an "easy" word. "Every child understands that." But the "Standard Dictionary" has thirty-two definitions of that little word, and the "Century Dictionary" also has a like number, not including obsoletes. Thus if you were to use that little word *give* in all its various senses, you might bring it in some twenty or thirty times within a limited space,—each time correctly, but with a total effect of appalling monotony. By selection of synonyms we obtain other forms of expression for these various meanings, which also express them more exactly. Thus:

**Give**

*Synonyms:*

*bestow, cede, communicate, confer, deliver, furnish, grant, impart, present, supply.*

To *give* is primarily to transfer to another's possession or ownership, without compensation; in its secondary

sense in popular use, it is to put into another's possession by any means and on any terms whatever; a buyer may say "*Give* me the goods, and I will *give* you the money"; we speak of *giving* answers, information, etc., and often of *giving* what is not agreeable to the recipient, as blows, medicine, reproof; but when there is nothing in the context to indicate the contrary, *give* is always understood in its primary sense; as, this book was *given* me. *Give* thus becomes, like *get,* a term of such general import as to be a synonym for a wide variety of words. To *grant* is to put into one's possession in some formal way, or by authoritative act; as Congress *grants* lands to a railroad corporation. To speak of *granting* a favor carries a claim or concession of superiority on the part of the one by whom the *grant* may be made; to *confer* has a similar sense; as, to *confer* a degree or an honor; we *grant* a request or a petition, but do not *confer* it. To *impart* is to *give* of that which one still, to a greater or less degree, retains; the teacher *imparts* instruction. To *bestow* is to *give* that of which the receiver stands in especial need; we *bestow* alms.

Hence, instead of using the one word *give* for every one of these various meanings, think which meaning you wish to express, and use the synonym for that special meaning. Thus your language will be marked by a natural and pleasing variety, and will, at the same time, be more explicit.

One convenient item to remember in the study of variety is, that it is always possible to vary by passing from the specific to the generic. Thus, if you are speaking of a horse, and if that one specified word is recurring too often, it is always possible to use one of certain generic terms. In some cases you may say *beast,*—the "poor beast," or the "lazy beast;" if he is ill-tempered and tricky, you may speak of the "vicious brute;" you may say in pity, "the poor creature showed signs of distress." Then, you have always in store the broad

generic word, *animal.* The horse, of whatever kind or quality, is sure to be an animal, and you may say, "I pitied the poor animal," or, "I admired the noble animal". So, for the specific designation of city, town, village, or hamlet, it is always possible to substitute the one generic word, "place". Either hope or fear, joy or sorrow, is a *feeling,* and is also an *emotion.* If you have already used the specific term, you may refer back to it as a "feeling" or an "emotion," and the reference will be readily understood.

Repetition should also be shunned on grounds of good taste, vivacity, and interest. There is nothing so deadly in style as monotony. In describing a lake on a windless day, I may speak of it as *calm, placid, quiet, smooth, still,* or *tranquil,* and any one of these six adjectives is fitting. But if I have occasion to refer to that sheet of water six times, and each time call it the "placid lake", can the repetition fail to be wearisome? If, however, I refer to it now as *calm,* again as *quiet, smooth, still,* or *tranquil,* there comes at each time a new turn of thought. My hearer or reader is a guest in my house, from which six windows look out upon the lake, each at a different angle. If I wish him to be impressed with the beauty of the scene, I may take him six times to one window,—a process which would come to have a certain sameness. But if I invite him at fitting moments to each of the six, he gains at each a fresh impression, sees a new landscape, and his sense of the loveliness of the view grows upon him throughout the whole time of his stay. Variety, within rational limits, is a delight in and for itself, and is a worthy object of painstaking endeavor.

2. Dignity.—There are certain words that have always moved amid high association, which have never been made commonplace, never worn threadbare in the

shop and the market, never "soiled by ignoble use." They are especially the words we inherit from the classic tongues of Greece and Rome,—not because those languages had no inferior words, but because it is chiefly the works of the masters of their literature that have come down to us, carrying still the nobility of their origin. Not a few words from other sources partake of a like nobility. There are many situations where nothing less than one of these choicer words is adequate to sustain a sentence or paragraph at its due elevation.

How Coleridge's famed poem would be brought down to the commonplace, if we were to substitute for the "Ancient Mariner" the equivalent phrase, the "Old Sailor!" Byron's famed description of the Battle of Waterloo begins:

"There was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gather'd then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men."

Try the substitution of any word of less dignity for "revelry," as:—"there was a sound of merriment," or "there was a sound of jollity by night,"—and note the loss. It would be equally hard to give a good equivalent for the word "chivalry." These words are, indeed, from the French, but they are from its higher reaches of style. There are occasions where one ill-chosen word would cause a fine paragraph to slump disastrously. Take the conclusion of Webster's oration on Bunker Hill Monument:

"Let it rise till it meet the sun in his coming! Let the earliest light of morning gild it, and parting day linger and play on its summit!"

This beautiful paragraph is built throughout of the

simplest Anglo-Saxon words, till at the very end we have the word "summit," taken almost unchanged from the Latin. Why? Well, try to substitute some other term. "Summit" may be defined as *top, peak,* or *apex.* Which of these could we use? To say, Let parting day linger and play on its *top,* would destroy the magic of the noble conclusion, and fall little short of making it ludicrous. In the same orator's grand tribute to Massachusetts, in his reply to Hayne, he says:

"There is her history; the world knows it by heart. The past, at least, is secure. There is Boston, and Concord, and Lexington, and Bunker Hill; and there they will remain forever."

Suppose we substitute a common phrase for those last two words, and make the sentence end, "and there they will *always stay.*" We have not changed the meaning, but we have spoiled the entire effect.

But this seeking for dignity must be subject to the requirements of good sense and of cultured taste. Otherwise it will become pretentious and stilted. Some of the greatest thoughts require, even because of their greatness, the very simplest words. Here only the master of language knows how adequately to choose.

In Macaulay's famed description of the Puritan, in his "Essay on Milton," occurs the following passage:

"Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion, the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker: but he set his foot on the neck of his king."

Note how the Latin words predominate in the array of the abstract and spiritual elements of character,—*self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion,—inflexible,*

*sagacious.* We would not change a word of them. They give to the paragraph a noble elevation, fitting to the type of character portrayed. We come then to a concrete act, though of tremendous significance, and this is stated in the very plainest Anglo-Saxon words,—"he set his foot on the neck of his king." It comes like the stroke of the headsman's axe, sharp, final, resistless. We would not change a word of that. But how is one to know which words are best at any given time? Use your best endeavors to become a master of language. Then you will know, by a kind of second sight,—the theme and the occasion impelling the trained mind to fitting choice.

3. Euphony.—This may be counted among the minor graces of style, but it is not unimportant. Of two or more words equally appropriate in meaning, one may be preferable simply because it will enter a particular combination with euphonic power.

It is comical to hear certain foreign actors or singers who can not speak English without a barbarian burr that can be recognized as far as their voice can be heard, tell us that "the English language is not euphonious!" No wonder they think so! In their rendering it certainly is not. And some of them are teachers. If they have to teach a pupil to sing or recite in French, German, or Italian, they will insist on every nicety of pronunciation in those languages. But no pains need be taken to pronounce English, the language of one hundred and fifty millions of people! For that a few broad vowels,—*ah* and *oh* and *oo*,—are capital enough; and the patient English-speaking audience read the printed text to find out what is being said or sung in their own language. On the lips of one who can speak it, however, the English speech is capable of great

beauty. Its orators, and especially its poets, have made much of its possible melody and rhythm. Thus Whittier writes:

"I love the old melodious lays,
That softly melt the ages through,
The songs of Spenser's golden days,
Arcadian Sidney's silver phrase,
Sprinkling our noon of time
With freshest morning dew."

Again we may note this quality in one of the two stanzas which Gray wrote for his "Elegy" and afterward—for what reason no one knows—eliminated from the poem:

"The thoughtless world to majesty may bow
Exalt the brave and idolize success,
But more to innocence their safety owe
Than power or genius ere conspired to bless."

Much of the charm of Milton's poetry is in its euphonic power, as in the following from "Paradise Lost:"

"Heaven opened wide
Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound,
On golden hinges moving."

He knew how, too, on occasion to utilize the uneuphonic, as again from "Paradise Lost" (Bk. II):

"On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
Of Erebus."

But though he could deal with horrors, his love was for the beautiful. How charming are these lines in Eve's evening talk to Adam in Paradise:

"Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glist'ring with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful ev'ning mild; then silent night,
With this her solemn bird and this fair moon,
And these the gems of heav'n, her starry train."
—"Paradise Lost," Bk. IV.

So perfect are the lines that the poet dares to subject them to the severest test,—that of studied repetition,—and we read them over again immediately afterward with added pleasure:

"But neither breath of morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glist'ning with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
Nor grateful ev'ning mild, nor silent night
With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon
Or glittering starlight, without thee is sweet."

Here is just change enough not to weary interest by monotony, but the recurrence of a refrain so lovely that we gladly welcome its return.

Every leading orator or writer will be found to have some euphonic standard,—some rhythm or cadence which he loves, sometimes too much,—so that he tends to return to it with too constant uniformity. Yet the fact that he has a standard preserves him from harsh and dissonant constructions that would ruin his diction. One great value of the interchangeableness of synonyms is, that many a time a word that would make a sentence harsh and forbidding in tone may be replaced by another near enough in meaning to fit the sense, and yet far more euphonious in connection with the associated

words; and the utterance of the highest truth has increased power when it is expressed in words that fall musically upon the ear, so appealing to the imagination and the sensibilities, as well as impressing the intellect. Beauty is itself a power.

### The Non-Identity of Synonyms

This has even a higher utility as adapting them most perfectly to the expression of thought. There is a marvelous power in that aggregation of symbols which we call language, by which something so fleeting and evanescent as thought may be crystallized into permanent form, able to arouse in another mind the same mental activity with which it left our own. A particular language may cease to be spoken among men, becoming what we call a "dead language;" but if we can discover what its words once meant as symbols of thought, we may take some musty manuscript, yellow with lapse of time and covered with the dust of centuries, and those long-forgotten words will bring to us the very thought, will awaken in us the very emotion that stirred the soul of that author of ancient days. Critics may dispute whether Homer ever lived, but in the Iliad and Odyssey Homer is alive to-day. Or, apply the test of the newest science; put a living thought upon the telegraph-wire, let the rattling key click it off over thousands of miles, and it will stir the soul of nations. But to do this the words must fit the thought. In a deep and true sense they must express that thought.

To such adequate expression the study of synonyms helpfully contributes. Among the qualities to be secured by a comparative review of the words possible to use in the utterance of a thought may be mentioned:

1. Exactness.—How often do we meet persons who seem always incapable of saying what they mean? They will go all around their thought, but never quite touch it. They will fairly wrestle with language, till they find the wrong word. Sometimes such a person is dimly aware of his own futility, and hints at it by adding to his inadequate words such phrases as, "you see," "you know," "you understand," in the attempt to inject into another mind by suggestion what fitting words would enable him simply and directly to say. Sometimes he completes his blundering phrases by the addition of the remark, "If you get what I mean," thus implying, with a fine instinct of impoliteness, that he has expressed the thought clearly enough, but the question is whether you have intellectual capacity to comprehend it. Such a speaker or writer reminds us of the Alaskan savage wrapped in furs and cowering over a fire of twigs, with coal mines that might warm nations under his feet. Dig out, rather, the hidden riches of language, till every thought shall find a tongue,—the very word or words to express its clear, full, and utmost meaning.

When a thought is expressed by some happy word or form of words, that says all that is meant, and says nothing more and nothing different, the mind rests. Such an expression is like the perfect focus of a telescope, giving a clear image, with no divergent rays,—or like a fixed point in a diagram, from which we may measure on in any new direction, and to which we may readily return. This is what Kipling has described as "the magic of the necessary word." It is of the first importance to provide good series of words for various ideas, and this is not a mere matter of phrase. It is a matter of thinking. Whoever will study any good set of definitions, look up the different words in the dic-

tionary, and see where they agree and where they divide, will define his own ideas. He will lay off the territory of his own thought, and it will be made new as an expanse of ground is after the surveyor has been over it. He will know how many acres it contains, and in what directions of the compass they lie, and where the woodland is, and where the pastures, the streams, and the meadows are. When you have laid out and measured the territory of thought, you will be able after that to traverse it with a readiness and certainty that could never otherwise be attained. A century ago the maps of Africa had in the center a vast blank space, across which was printed with great letters in a waving line, "Mountains of the Moon." Now we trace there the course of the mighty Congo, and the outline of those great lakes, the Albert and Victoria Nyanzas, and the boundaries of the colonies that powerful European nations have established within that once uncharted space.

The center of many a mind is occupied by some vaguely traced chain of "Mountains of the Moon," where exploration, measurement, definition, would reveal available mental territory, within which new and nobler activities of thought might find a home. In proportion as you insist on finding a distinctive word for each separate idea, you are exploring and mapping off your mental territory for intelligent and profitable occupancy. One, on the contrary, who is content to use some single word for quite distinct ideas, keeps his mind a chaos:

"—a dark
Illimitable ocean, without bound,
Without dimension; where length, breadth, and height,
And time and place are lost;—
Chance governs all."

Poverty of language is always accompanied by poverty of thought. Do not rest till you have found a distinct word to express each distinct idea. When you have found that word, you will often be astonished to discover how the thought itself is clarified, made more clear by clear expression. That happy and fitting term will many a time be a gateway, beyond which new vistas of thought expand before you. You have enriched your own mind and increased your own capacity of thinking by fitting and appropriate expression of thought. Thus Burke says in his speech, "On Conciliation with America":

"They [the American colonies] complain that they are taxed without their consent: you answer that you will fix the sum at which they shall be taxed. That is, you give them the very grievance for the remedy."

"Grievance" is there the one very word for the thought to be expressed, and, turn as you will, you will find it hard to substitute any other which shall be adequate.

When, in the great speech in Faneuil Hall which laid the foundation of his fame, the young orator, Wendell Phillips, said:

"I thought those pictured lips would have broken into voice to rebuke the recreant American—the slanderer of the dead,—"

that word "rebuke" was the one word for the occasion.

Sometimes in writing you catch a word that does not satisfy you. Perhaps it suggests what you want, but does not fully express your meaning. Perhaps it suggests what you do not want. You feel uncomfortable over it. Often in conversation one pauses and hesitates, —he is not saying just what he wants to say by the

only word that rises to his lips. Or perhaps you are not sure which of two, or even three, words is the one you want. Now, how to manage them. You are writing, perhaps in a hurry, or in some great stress of excitement. All the best writing is done under stress. When the thought is looming ahead, the pen can not possibly be fast enough to keep up with it, and there is danger lest it slip away before you can fix it upon the page. At such a time shall you lay aside your writing, and go to the dictionary or the book of synonyms, to wrestle with a word? That is a ruinous method, sure to produce a wooden style. By the time you have done that, the heat and glow of your writing will be gone, and your vivid interest in the subject dulled or deadened. You have exchanged the telescope for the microscope, and the landscape has vanished. Do not stop a moment. On the other hand, do not let it go at random, so that the doubtful or inadequate word shall appear in the final copy. Write the word that seems at the moment most nearly suitable, and then underscore it with a wave-line, or mark it with an accountant's check. Later, in your revision you may deal adequately and deliberately with that single item of style. If the choice is between two words, as "armistice" and "truce," it may be well to write them both. Put "armistice," for instance, in your text, and enter after it in parenthesis or in the margin ("truce"),—and go on. In your revision your attention will be recalled to such items by your warning notes, and in the revision you are master of the situation. What you have written is nailed down, and can not get away from you. You are then able to descend upon the doubtful items with your book of synonyms and your dictionary, and so make the choice of words more nearly suitable to the demands of the occasion.

2. Delicacy of Discrimination.—As you view one of the paintings that delight the centuries you soon become aware of the difficulty of setting limits to its various shades of color. The sky is blue, but it is not all the same blue. Where does it begin to lighten or deepen? Here is a rich red robe falling in careless folds around a figure, but it is a different red, according to each gradation of light or shadow. The green of the forest trees proves to be of many shades and hues, all subtly blending into one.

At various points in some great gallery you will see artists' easels, where copyists are working with feverish haste to reproduce the masterpiece before them. They are painting mechanically. There is red, and they put on red; there is blue, and they make it one solid blue; and when the work is done, it is oftenest a travesty, rather than a copy of the world-renowned painting. The master, with limitless skill and toil, patiently elaborated those infinitely varying hues and tints that make the wondrous perfection. So the artist in language toils laboriously, and not all in vain, to present by fitting words the infinitely varying tints and shades of thought, which only the amplest command of language can enable him at all to do.

It will be seen on reflection that this delicacy of discrimination is but a department of exactness. In proportion as the speaker or writer fits his words exactly to his thought, they will vary with every modification of the thought. It is the sunlight itself that varies the hues of the forest or the sky. The artist but seeks to portray upon the canvas what nature has done. So the power of delicately chosen words is that they portray with a fine fidelity the variations that actually exist in the world of thought.

We have spoken previously of discreet change of phrase as a worthy means of securing variety of style. But by simple faithfulness in the expression of thought through all its varied transformations we attain a variety that is deeper, more essential and pervading, than can be elaborated by any artifices of style. As scarcely any two ideas or emotions are completely alike, if we can find for each an exact expression, our expressions must be constantly varied and ever new. By its fitness our utterance will have the variety of life, the sparkle and freshness of ever-changing thought.

3. Fulness.—Often it is a great study to bring language up to the exaltation of thought. The far summit rises beyond the clouds, white in the light of a loftier sky. What words may picture for others the vision of grandeur that the soul in some supreme moment has attained? Many a vision fades and dies, just because no words were found to portray the splendor of its glory. This is the problem of the orator, the poet, the essayist, of all who would greatly influence their fellow men by speech. The commonplace is everywhere. To rise above it, one must know the words of loftiest range.

Thus in Tennyson's "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington," when he would picture the victor of Waterloo as he stood in the affection and reverence of his countrymen, he writes:

> "Great in council and great in war,
> Foremost captain of his time,
> Rich in saving common-sense,
> And as the greatest only are,
> In his simplicity sublime."

"Sublime" is the only word that could fitly close the sketch of such a character as the poet has pictured. "Grand," "noble," "lofty," "majestic," "admirable,"

—all would fall short. SUBLIME rises to the supreme height of greatness. It is all the more effective since it is made the last word in the sentence. William E. Henley knew the value of last words when he wrote his familiar lines:

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul."

The same may be said of the lamented Rupert Brooke, the English poet, who died of illness at Scyros while on his way to serve in the operations in the Ægean during the early part of the great European war of 1914, and who, in a poem entitled "The Soldier," wrote:

"If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed."

That these highest words may be available for noble uses, they must not be brought forth on ordinary or trivial occasions, but be held carefully in reserve. Otherwise one comes to some great occasion with no words to meet its demand except such as have been already profaned or belittled by ignoble use.

There are times for the ordinary and commonplace. On those occasions use ordinary and commonplace words. Your words are fitting then, and you are saving your strength and the attention of your hearers or readers for something greater to come. Then, as the plane of thought rises, let the words rise with it, fitting the thought still. So, at the very climax of your attainment, you have other words, yet unused and unworn, that may come forth with their own native force to match the greatest thought you have to utter.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE ENGLISH DICTIONARY AND HOW TO USE IT

A complete dictionary is a compendium of all human knowledge—so far, at least, as that can be expressed in the words of one language. For all real knowledge is sure to find its expression in words, so that if we know all the words of a language, we have a general knowledge of all which that language can tell.

The making of a dictionary is a vast undertaking. In the olden time an English dictionary could be made by one man, with a certain amount of clerical assistance. So, doubtless, was prepared the first English dictionary worthy of the name, giving not only words, but their definitions in English. This was the work of John Bullokar, published in 1616, and entitled "The English Expositor." We know certainly that Dr. Samuel Johnson's "Dictionary of the English Language," published in 1755, was made in seven years by that one man, with only the aid of humble assistants, whose work consisted very largely in copying quotations, which he had selected and marked for them. In the United States, in 1807, Noah Webster, then forty-nine years of age, and distinguished for a quarter of a century as a writer and educator, and especially as the author of "Webster's Spelling Book," which had come to be used almost universally in the United States, set definitely to work at his "American Dictionary of the English Language,"

for which he had long been collecting material. He spent twenty-one years in all in the preparation of his dictionary, exclusive of the preliminary work done before 1807, himself defining from 70,000 to 80,000 words. Worcester's "Dictionary of the English Language," published in 1859, was likewise an individual work. Since that period no great English dictionary has been the personal achievement of a single editor. The rapid advance of knowledge has made this a physical impossibility. The later editions of the "Webster's" dictionaries, which are new works in all but the name, the "Century Dictionary," of 1891, and the "Standard Dictionary," of 1893, were each many years in preparation under the hands of an extensive staff of eminent scholars. The "New Standard Dictionary" of 1913 numbers among its editors "more than 380 specialists and other scholars." The "New English Dictionary on Historical Principles," published at Oxford, England, commonly called from the name of its leading editor, "Murray's Dictionary," is a vast work in ten volumes, the preparation of which in its present form has occupied more than thirty-eight years, while the collections on which it is founded had begun long before under the charge of the Philological Society of England. In every one of these great dictionaries of recent years, each department, as of Zoology, Botany, Chemistry, Geology, Astronomy, Physics, Etymology, etc., has been under the charge of a specialist of eminence in that department, while an extensive office staff of scholarly editors, with a special bureau of quotations, has reviewed and unified all the work of the various departments and shaped all into proper lexicographical form. Not one of the learned editors could have done it all; not one of them but has occasion often to seek instruction from the very diction-

ary on which he has labored, when he would know of matters outside of his own department.

The result of all this is that the student should respect the dictionary. It knows more than you do. Under any given word you may be sure of obtaining a definition prepared by a master of that subject, and giving the best result available up to the time of going to press. No dictionary is infallible, but any error a great modern English dictionary may contain will be one that has entered in spite of all that the care and toil of a force of scholars including some of the most eminent men of the day could do to prevent. The chance of an average reader finding such an error may be regarded as negligible. Come to your dictionary in a humble and teachable spirit. If its statements differ from your previous belief or practise on any point, conclude that you, yourself, have been in error—unless you are able to reverse its decision by some other authority of equal ability. Be sure that if you do not study the dictionary at all, you are living in a density of ignorance with which you can only be satisfied because it is so complete.

"But the dictionary contains so much that I do not want." So does the telephone directory. You are visiting or trading with very few of the persons named therein; but you do not know at what moment you may wish to call up any one of them, from Adams to Zimmerman. The directory gives you the power to speak at will with any one of thousands in a great city. The dictionary is a directory of words. Within its covers are ranged thousands upon thousands, waiting silently, unobtrusively, patiently, for your summons.

But do not be afraid of the extra words. They can not get out. Some persons have a horror of the dictionary, looking upon it as a beehive from which, if care-

lessly joggled, swarms of unreasoning words may burst out and sting them with demand for instant utterance. Such a disaster has never been known to happen within the history of lexicography. The captive words are like the Arabian genii imprisoned under the seal of Solomon, powerless to escape until some one releases the seal. In fact, persons have been known to live for years in the same room with a massive dictionary without being in the slightest degree affected by the proximity.

On the other hand, the possibilities of the transfusion of knowledge from such a reservoir to the receptive mind are magnificent. How often we should be glad of a wise, kind friend at hand to explain to us at any moment some perplexity that arises, as a child confidently asks a father at any instant for full information on any subject of human knowledge. In all his early years the child, by his ceaseless questions, is using father, mother, nurses, and friends as dictionaries. In your own experience you come with equal suddenness to a perplexity in your reading. You have only to turn to your waiting dictionary for instant explanation.

A very common way to deal with such difficulties is to "give them the go-by"—pass them with "never mind". Such apathy is characteristic of the vegetative mind. Some years ago a literary man set out to find the cable power-house in New York, but having failed to note with sufficient accuracy the exact location, was dropped by the street-car several blocks away, in a district largely occupied by foreigners. Then began a quest. Passers-by whom he accosted knew nothing of the cable power-house. He applied confidently to the drivers of several delivery wagons, who had never heard of it. He burst into a barber's shop, but neither the barber nor the customer on whom he was operating had ever heard

of such an institution. There appeared to be no policeman in that precinct, so that it was impossible to appeal to the majesty of the law. Yet all the while he could hear the boom of the great engines of the cable power-house filling the air. At length the explorer set out to follow the sound, as of a torrent in the wilderness, and so, at last, by his own unaided intelligence, came out at the back door of the building that filled an entire block. Those people lived in the hum of that machinery and never asked the cause. Perhaps they knew the building by some other name? That is possible, but by no means certain. A little later the same investigator came suddenly upon an imposing structure rising to completion in lower New York, and was at once interested to learn what it was. He observed a man standing near and watching very intently the workmen who were swinging a great stone into place on the cornice. He stepped up to him and inquired: "Will you please tell me, sir, what building that is?" The man turned with a start, and answered with unaffected surprise: "*I* don't know." It had not occurred to him as a matter of interest to ascertain that he was watching the completion of the Hall of Records of the chief city of the New World. Yet there are persons who covet such an apathetic existence, suited to the mind of an oyster rather than of a man, and resent any attempt to arouse them from it. The worst of that condition is that it is progressive, and that, with lapse of years, tolerated dulness develops into impenetrable stupidity. Any shock or any urgency that can set such an intellect scouting toward its own frontiers may lead it to the discovery of unimagined realms beyond.

The intellect needs often to be roused to activity. Place a wakeful sentinel of inquiry at every outpost;

establish a picket-line of interrogation; challenge every new word and every new fact with an everlasting "Who goes there?" You come to the startling discovery, "Here's a word in my own language that I don't know. Isn't there some way to find out?" Why, certainly. Treat the new word in your own language with the same respect you would pay to a new word in Latin or Greek, French, German, or other foreign language, if you were studying that. Look up that word in your dictionary. Like a good general, do not leave an enemy in your rear in the shape of an undefined word.

The first step in education beyond the primary school is to have a dictionary. It is one of the most beneficent of modern literary institutions, and is supremely necessary for self-education, where one has not the advantage of continual association with teachers and studious companions. But do not fall into the easy delusion that "A dictionary is a dictionary," as some people will buy anything called a watch, to find that it will stop at uncertain intervals by day or night, lose an hour or two without visible provocation, and that it needs to be set whenever you wish to know the time of day. A cheap dictionary reprinted from plates seventy-five years old, in squalid, heart-breaking type, is enough to wreck the English scholarship of the most ambitious and long-suffering student. Nor will a showy binding help the shabby interior, any more than a gold case will help the movement of the timeless watch. An inexperienced student will do best to ascertain from a teacher or other trusted friend what dictionary is best for his circumstances and present stage of progress.

There is much to be said in favor of the smaller dictionaries. In the first place, you will want a small dictionary, anyway,—even if you have the most extended

of the great "unabridged." You are sure to need a handbook of English, giving you the substance of all you will ordinarily require, and of a size to be carried from place to place in your study, or from room to room, as your convenience in reading may require. Such a book has the advantage that it may always be taken on occasion to a better light, and that it gives you fewer pages to turn over each time you look for a word. For many persons,—students, clerks, stenographers, and others,—a consideration not to be despised is that such a book will be more moderate in price. But pay what is necessary in order to get what is worth buying at all. The abridgments of the chief dictionaries have been carefully made under the supervision of competent editors, well acquainted in each case with the larger work, so that the smaller book has, as far as it goes, the best qualities of that from which it is abridged. Large or small, get a dictionary that may be depended upon as accurate and excellent.

By one who has a settled home or office, and can afford the expense, a full or "unabridged" dictionary, covering the entire range of English reading, is greatly to be desired. In a school, while every pupil should have his or her own dictionary, there should be also a complete dictionary readily accessible to all. In every case the large and the small dictionary should belong to the same system, so as to agree, and not conflict with each other in phonetics, spelling, division of syllables, etc. One who has occasion to consult a dictionary in school or office, and also at home, should have, if possible, a copy at each place, that there may be no "lost motion". The apparatus providing the very fundamentals of speech should be always, everywhere, and instantly available.

We would even suggest, with some trepidation, that it is a good thing to read the dictionary. Undoubtedly this will be scouted by many as monstrous. Yet some masters of language have done just that, among them Brougham, Macaulay, Daniel Webster and Emerson. Try it, not with grim resolution as you take medicine, but as you sometimes glance at objects in a showcase, with no expectation of buying,—and often buy in consequence. You will probably be disposed to skip some dry, technical terms, and for this will need no directions. But it will be strange if you do not find some word to you unfamiliar, yet so forcible and excellent that you are glad to know it; or some new meaning of a word that you supposed you knew well, so well that you would not have looked it up; or if you do not have recalled to your memory something that you once knew well, but have been in danger of dropping out of use; or have ideas that have become vague and worn by frequent handling, cut to sharp edges again by exact definition. Macaulay seems to assume that a dictionary is of course to be read, when he speaks of Johnson's as "the first dictionary which could be *read with pleasure.*" He adds that "a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over the pages." Emerson writes:

"Neither is a dictionary a bad book to read. There is no cant in it, no excuse of explanation, and it is full of suggestion—the raw material of possible poems and histories. Nothing is wanting but a little shuffling, sorting, ligature and cartilage." *

Horace Greeley said regarding the resumption of specie payments after the Civil War, "The way to resume is to resume," and the event justified the utter-

* "Society and Solitude." Books and Reading.

ance. So the way to use the dictionary is to use it. Say to yourself, "Somehow I am going to get out of that book what there is in it. Others have done it, and what they have done I can do."

Much may be done without a method. Plunge in somewhere, look up something, then the next thing, and the next, and you will ultimately evolve a method of your own. Whoever begins to use the dictionary with simple, dogged determination will come out somewhere. He will learn to use it in some way, even if not in the best way. But some suggestions will help the learner to get the most out of this repository of knowledge.

1. Locate your dictionary so that it can be used. It has been found that the athlete who can win the hundred-yard dash can not cross a large room or climb a flight of stairs to consult a dictionary. The most studious woman will scarcely undertake to lift a twenty-pound dictionary from a lower shelf to the level of a table for the purpose of consulting it, while for a child this is physically impossible. A handsome—and expensive—dictionary in several volumes in a glass case in a parlor will be about as useful as a cabinet of Japanese bric-à-brac. Whatever an intelligent person really means to use often, he or she locates so that it can be used readily. Do not allow your fine dictionary to be like the bow of Ulysses, which, as a critic shrewdly remarks, "was chiefly famed for the difficulty of using it." The head of a certain office had a disputed question to settle, requiring use of the dictionary, to which he seemed unaccountably disinclined to refer. At length he rose reluctantly, walked some yards to the safe, removed a pile of reports and some miscellaneous volumes, lifted the heavy "unabridged", carried it over to his desk, where he scraped a place for it, and then proceeded to

look up his word. Evidently nothing but dire necessity could drive him to that exertion.

A large dictionary should have a convenient, accessible location, as much as a cash-register, as a prime consideration. Preferably it should have some exclusive support. There are a number of dictionary-holders in the market. The best are of metal, adjustable to any desired height, so contrived as to hold the book closed when not in use, but to permit it to be opened at any moment to any page, and to hold it open at that page as long as may be desired. There are brackets that may be attached to the wall or to a table or desk for the same purpose, and there are revolving bookcases provided with a dictionary-holder on the top. Cheapest of all is a light wooden frame, such as any one with a little skill in woodworking can easily make for himself, just large enough to hold the book when open, and set at the right angle for easy reading. This latter is a very important consideration in the use of any large book. If it lies flat on table or desk, the eye, as it travels down the page, must be continually adjusting itself to a new focus, and the reader becomes tired without knowing why. Thus a new trap is set for laziness. Such a book should be held by some means at an angle of about forty-five degrees, as one unconsciously holds a newspaper; then the eye reads with a constant focus, and with the minimum of fatigue.

The small dictionary has tricks of its own. It may abscond into a seldom-used room; it may hide among a quantity of books and papers, from which the labor of unearthing it is more than the exertion of using it after it is found. The small dictionary must be assigned a well-known and convenient place, to which it shall be regularly and continually returned. If various mem-

bers of the same family wish to use the same dictionary, they should be provided with separate copies. Have a down-stairs and an up-stairs copy, for instance, each kept where it can always be found. In the office of an eminent editor, when a question arose, he reached out without turning his revolving chair, and laid his hand upon a medium-sized dictionary, settled the matter, and put the book back where he could find it just as easily the next time. He could have laid his hand upon it in the dark. And the shelf was in a little bookcase of plain boards, such as any good workman could put together in half an hour, fitted into a niche close beside him. Its merit was not beauty, but accessibility.

2. Learn how to handle the tool. The dictionary is a tool for a lifetime. Every good worker, in beginning with a new tool or apparatus of any kind—a gun, automobile, typewriter, sewing-machine, harvester, or fireless-cooker—will, first of all, learn something about it. Then he may develop his own individual way of handling the instrument, but that will be in harmony with its original construction, and vastly better than any method he might have fallen into without study or explanation. Find out all you can about this tool before beginning to work with it. It will pay you to take the time required at the outset. We will not inflict the advice, always given, but never taken, to "read the preface",—but we will say, look it over. Find what the editors and publishers think they have to offer. Especially obtain a good preliminary knowledge of a section dealing with "abbreviations used in this book." You will not probably at once remember them all, but you will know where to find them. Then turn back to them from time to time till you know them all. We will undertake that many a person who has used one dictionary for years could not pass an examina-

tion on its abbreviations and arbitrary signs, which he has been sliding over, leaving unexplored corners of knowledge, and never quite sure what his own dictionary was trying to say to him. Till you understand its system, a book is never all your own.

3. Learn the geography of your dictionary—so that you can travel through it freely. If it has, as most of such works now have, a thumb-index, practise the use of that. Apply a little intelligence to the mechanism. Study the space occupied by the various letters. Thus, in the Standard Dictionary, A occupies 149 pages; B, 111 pages; C, 202 pages; A, B, and C together, a little less than one-fourth of the total number of pages in that dictionary. On the other hand, J occupies 16 pages only; K includes 17; Y, 6; Z, 7, and X, 2. The first twelve letters, A to L (inclusive) occupy almost one-half the space given to the entire alphabet. If you open the book in the middle, you will come almost exactly to the beginning of M. Learn what we may call "the sub-alphabet system," by the second, third, and subsequent letters of words, so that you think instantly that *cor* comes after *car*, and that *cur* comes a long way after both. Not every word in C, for instance, will be found close to the marginal C of the thumb-index, and if you want a word near the end of the list under C, there is no reason why you should begin at *cab*, and solemnly turn over two hundred pages to find your way to *czar*. You know that a word in *Cz* must be almost at the end of the C alphabet. Open at D of your thumb-index, and *czar* will probably be directly before your eyes at the end of C. By this preliminary knowledge of the relative space occupied by the various letters, ready familiarity with sub-alphabeting, and a deft use of the thumb-index, you can soon make the book obey your

hand and answer to your thought. Practise a little in quick turning to various letters. This will speedily become automatic. You will be saved from the nightmare feeling that you have that whole book in solution, to deal with all at once when you want only one little word; and you will gain the pleasure that always comes with easy control of mechanism.

4. Learn the phonetic system of your dictionary. This will almost certainly differ from the phonetic system of any other dictionary. Each work has its own special set of symbols for denoting the same sounds. If you do not know the system of your book, you will be as helpless as one who should try to talk Dutch in Paris. As you expect to make yourself at home in your dictionary, take pains to learn its language of symbols or diacritics. Go through its entire phonetic key at least once, pronouncing the letters in the easy specimen words given. Make sure how your own dictionary distinguishes the sound of *a* in *at*, for instance, from the sound of *a* in *all*. You will then speedily fix the system in mind by referring as occasion arises, either to the full pronouncing key or to the abbreviated key repeated at the top or bottom of every page. This will soon become as clear to you as if some one spoke the marked word in your hearing.

Remember that, in speaking, *the word as pronounced* is the only word the hearer gets. How can he tell whether you mean *fallow, fellow* or *follow, seller* or *sailor, sample* or *simple, set* or *sit, tail* or *tall* or *tell* or *toll*, except by the difference you make in the sound of the leading vowel in each case? Hence, every word should be rightly spoken. It is true we do guess out much of very imperfect speech by the context; but a person of any education should be ashamed to have

others guessing out his utterances as those of an ignorant foreigner. Moreover, mispronounced words may be misunderstood or absolutely lost; if you say *hor'i-zn*, your hearer may not know that you meant *ho-rī'zon*.

Then, we owe something to the euphony and delicacy of our language. There is a constant tendency among ill-educated and negligent persons toward a coarsening of speech, reducing all sounds to a very few, and those the harshest, or such as are pronounced with the least intelligent effort. They speak the finer and more delicate *merry* so that it can not be distinguished from *marry*. Especially they give in as many syllables as possible the short *u* sound, which requires no distinct exertion of the vocal organs, but mere emission of breath,—the inarticulate grunt of the hog; they say *guv'ur-munt*, *sup'plu-munt*, *in'stur-munt*. It is along such lines of ignorant, indolent, rude, or harsh utterance that the degradation of a language is wrought out. By such means the dialect of the lower classes in some parts of Italy has lost all the sweetness and music that mark the pure Italian. One prime object of education is to resist all such corrupting tendencies.

Note the pronunciation of every word you look up in your dictionary, however well you think you know it. You may find that you have been pronouncing it wrong for years. You may have been saying *ad'dress* for *ad-dress'*, *ideer'* or *i-dee'* for *i-de'a*, *i-deel'* for *i-de'al*, *reel* for *re'al*, *pome* for *po'em*, *po'try* for *po'et-ry*, and *sat'n* for *sat'in*. It is certainly droll to hear a student, supposedly acquiring a "liberal education," unable to pronounce in English the name of the language of ancient Rome, but informing you that he is "studying *Lat'n*." On the other hand, you need not cultivate the false precision of pronouncing the *t* in *often;* say, not

*of'Ten,* but *of'n.* Are you accustomed to make any difference in the pronunciation of the words *dew, do,* and *due?* Your dictionary will tell you that there is a fine difference of sound there well worth preserving. Many persons have acquired pronunciations so false that they have gone astray on the spelling of some words in consequence, and cannot find them in the dictionary. A story is told of two Western lawyers of the olden time, who had just installed in their office a copy of "Webster's Unabridged". Soon after, one turned to the other, and inquired: "Do you spell *eque*—or *equi*—in "equinomical"? "I'm not sure," said the other; "look in the dictionary." After a search the first said with surprise, " 'Tain't here!" The second came to help him, but had no better success. Then they stared at each other, till one exclaimed: "Well, what do you think of a man that would get up a big dictionary like that, and not put in such a common word as 'equinomical'?"

Sometimes you will find that more than one pronunciation is allowed, and perhaps that some pronunciation you have thought erroneous is justified by good authority. A swift glance at the phonetics of every word to which you open will inform you of these things, preserve you from falling into ruts of utterance, and make mind and ear delicately attentive to the acoustics of speech. This wide-awake alertness is wholesome, helping to keep the mind alive, in all its powers, as a healthy body is, to the finger-tips.

5. Note spellings as you pass—and with them division of syllables. This becomes very easy when it is habitual. Observe whether your dictionary spells *skilful* or *skillful; wilful* or *willful; traveler* or *traveller.* Observe whether you should write *etherial* or *ethereal; erronious* or *erroneous.* You will soon pick up these

things as you go, with scarcely perceptible effort. It is astonishing how much can be done by mere absorption, when attention is once aroused. This is illustrated by the familiar fact that you can walk or run faster over a path which you know. Once you had to notice all the turns, the stones and puddles; but, having at first noticed them, you have now relegated them to the subconsciousness, and you turn or step around or over them by an automatic decision swifter than thought. So you may make your dictionary help you to unconscious correctness of spelling.

6. Pick up derivations. Observe, we do not say: "study etymology". Most people have a horror of etymology—perhaps due to undesirable pedagogical methods of administration. Yet an intelligent scholar can interest a mixed company of young and old in the derivation of some one familiar word. The old fable told of a clock that stopped because the pendulum had been calculating that it would have to tick 31,536,000 times in the ensuing year, till the minute-hand redeemed the situation by asking Mr. Pendulum to "please tick once," and inquired: "Did you find that very fatiguing?" The matter assumed a wholly different guise on the basis of only one tick a second. It is marvelous how ingeniously the average reader contrives to escape etymologies. In most dictionaries these are placed as chevaux-de-frise in front of the definition. Yet most people do get by without even the smell of etymological fire upon their garments. In the Standard Dictionary the etymologies are placed at the end of each article, after the definition, and most readers cheerfully quit before coming to them. Yet it is not very hard, and it is interesting to note whether the particular word you are dealing with is derived from the Latin, Greek, French, Anglo-

Saxon, or other origin. By merely glancing at such items in passing one may make a good English dictionary largely supply the want of a knowledge of Latin, Greek, or other languages that have contributed to our own.

7. Put solid work upon definitions. Many other things are important, but correct definition is indispensable, in order that language may be a medium of communication between man and man. "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." That for which persons oftenest go to the dictionary is the meaning of some word. The meaning of words is worth working for, because it is the very life and essence of language. But this solid work is not necessarily hard work; it may sometimes be, and no one unwilling to do some hard work can succeed in language —or in anything else. Much of the time, however, this gathering of information is fascinating work. Here are so many things, not that you *must,* but that you *may* know. Now is your opportunity to find out. Here are nuggets to be picked up, and you are going to fill your hands.

One of the first things that will impress you in definitions is the surprising number often found under a single word. Of *set* there are 39 definitions for the verb, 7 for the adjective, and 18 for the noun—64 in all. The numbers vary in different dictionaries, some much exceeding those above given. It is not the long words, like *illimitable* and *interminable,* that are hard to define, but the short and supposedly "easy" ones. Among those especially difficult Dr. Johnson enumerates in his preface, *bear, break, come, cast, full, get, give, do, put, send, go, run, make, take, turn, throw.* Noting this abundance of

meanings will keep you from the error of the petty critics, who, knowing one meaning of a word, insist that its use in any other sense must be erroneous. More of the puristic criticism with which the English-speaking world has been nagged and goaded has sprung from this source than from any other. Here is an author who has learned that *administer* means "to direct, manage, regulate, as a government or an estate." Hence, he is inexpressibly shocked,—so that not even shrieking capitals can express his consternation,—that any one should speak of *administering* medicine or punishment. But, turning to our dictionary, we find, as definition 2, "to supply, furnish, or provide with, as something necessary or required; apply to, or superintend the application of; as, to *administer* the sacraments, punishment, medicine, etc." That use of the word seems not to be so bad, when we know enough. We need to know a word all round before we are competent to dogmatize about it.

One objector says: "I'm a busy man; I haven't time to go through twenty or thirty meanings when I want one. I might as well ring the bell at every house in a block till I come to the right number." Even so, you do have time to note whether there are other houses in that block, or only vacant lots. Do as much for your dictionary. By the swiftest glance you may notice, if you only will notice, "How many meanings that word has!" You snatch the one you want on the instant. But an intelligent curiosity is aroused, and on more leisure you come back to study that list through. You will find it interesting to ascertain, if possible, how one meaning was derived from another, and how large a bank account that word has, which you have thought of as only an ordinary individual. Any word becomes more to you when you know all its resources of meaning. Here is a

crystal of quartz, of which one remarks that it is a pretty bit of stone. But hold it up and turn it in the sunshine till the light is reflected from its many faces and thrown back from its clear depths, and it becomes far more than a "pretty bit of stone", as you appreciate its perfect fashioning and its many-sided brilliancy.

By watchful observation of words you may find that your favorite magazine-writer is using some word in a wrong sense:—perhaps that you yourself have been accustomed to do so. You may read that "The earthquake at Krakatoa *transpired* August 26, 1883." Now, when an earthquare happens, it has no occasion to *transpire,* for it is at once widely known to a large part of the earth's inhabitants. But to *transpire* is "to become known slowly or gradually; to exhale, as it were, into publicity." Thus it may *transpire* that a supposedly wealthy man was bankrupt at his death. The use of the word as a synonym for *happen* is a recent corruption, and also unfortunate, inasmuch as we have two perfectly good synonyms for *happen,* namely, *occur* and *take place,* not to mention *chance, come to pass,* and certain others. You may have been accustomed to saying that some one's conduct *aggravates* you. But your dictionary will tell you that is a false use of the word. *Aggravate* properly means to *increase.* Disease may be *aggravated* by anxiety; but for the sense of rousing to anger, you have a number of good words, such as *anger, exasperate, irritate,* or *provoke.*

Look up in your dictionary any unfamiliar word, or any familiar word used in an unfamiliar sense. That usage which is strange to you may be wrong. If so, you will learn the fact, and can drive a stake of negation there. You have settled one thing. That word is not to be used, or not to be so used. But that usage may be

right, in which case you have made a positive increase of knowledge; you have gained a new word or a new meaning. Get things settled. Recognize the fact that there is ultimate authority:—that certainty is possible. Flee from the cloud-land of conjecture. Banish the dogmatism of personal opinion. It is amusing to hear a group of persons disputing as to the meaning of a word, with a dictionary easily accessible, perhaps in the very room where they are gathered. So strong is this tendency to trust haphazard opinions, that one group of students known to the author had actually to make the rule "Never to discuss anything that could be settled by the dictionary."

But do not think we would ask you always to stop your reading to look up the word in question. Reading, to be attractive, or even useful, must have some life and movement. Read on. Follow the thought. Let your word wait if you can possibly get by. But keep a pad or memorandum book beside you, and swiftly note down that word. By the time you come to a breathing-space, that word will probably have some companions picked up on the way. Then concentrate your notes upon your dictionary until you have settled the last doubtful item. In listening to a public address a similar method is practicable. Have a pencil and an unpretentious memorandum book, and note from time to time any word or phrase you may wish afterward to look up. It is no discourtesy to a speaker to show yourself interested enough to take notes. Or, by a little practise, you can accustom yourself to make mental notes of matters to be verified afterward. One advantage of this method is that when you hear an unfamiliar word or phrase in conversation you are not compelled to put up a signal of distress, but may simply fix

the expression in mind, and at the first opportunity resort to the tribunal of your dictionary.

Let us consider for a moment a single definition, and see what it contains. Take the following definition of the noun *mood:*

"Temporary or capricious state or condition of the mind in regard to passion or feeling; especially, inclination toward some particular act or occupation; temper of mind; humor; disposition; as, in angry *mood.*"

"On all his sad or restless *moods*
The patient peace of Nature stole."
WHITTIER: "My Namesake," St. 24.

Here are to be noted four elements:

(a) What is termed the "definitive statement," extending to the word "occupation." This definitive statement is the gist of the definition, as far as the editor found himself able to put it into words. This is always to be first and most carefully considered.

(b) Synonyms. In this case we have three: "temper of mind; humor; disposition." These words are not exact, but partial, equivalents. For instance, "disposition" does not express all we mean by "mood." But it helps to give an idea of the meaning by suggestion. As a rule, such synonyms should be looked up, when time allows, and their definitions considered one by one. When lists or paragraphs of synonyms are separately given, those should be carefully studied.

(c) The illustrative phrase: "as, an angry *mood.*" Such illustrative phrases are very carefully chosen, as giving the editor's idea of the way in which the word defined may be properly used, and should always be thoughtfully noted.

(d) The quotation. This shows how an eminent author has actually used the word in literature. Some-

times a number of quotations are given. In the great "Murray's" dictionary they are very numerous. These are of supreme importance, as indicating the best English usage,—and the best usage is the final authority in language. Words mean what the foremost writers and speakers have understood and used them to mean. We might say that quotations make the dictionary:—not the few that can be actually printed within the crowded space of any single work, but the multitude that have been collected and pondered by a long succession of editors, each reviewing the results obtained by all his predecessors.

8. Make the dictionary define itself.—The complaint is often made, "Why, I don't understand some of the very words used in the definitions." Look them up, friend! Look them up! Did you imagine editors could make a dictionary out of the stock of words you had to start with? Of course you will find unfamiliar words, but welcome them. Do not treat them after the fashion of trolley-car operators, who regard stopping for passengers as an annoying interruption to the comfort and continuity of their trip. You are after knowledge. Here are some new words which you may learn. Take them on board right now. Go from definition to definition. Run down the meaning to its last retreat. Do not hold your dictionary by one end, with the leverage all against you. Coordinate the entire apparatus, and make one part minister to and explain another. Thus every time you turn to the book you will come away knowing that much more. By following up definitions you will build up every meaning with many relations, and will call in the great power of association of thought, to make all better understood and better remembered.

9. Look at the pictures.—This may seem to some persons a frivolous suggestion, because they do not understand the purpose of the pictorial part of the dictionary. They feel, "We are not children, to be amused with a picture-book." But the pictures are illustrations as truly as the illustrative phrases. They are carefully chosen for that express purpose, and are, in actual intent, parts of the definitions. Thus, it has been found practically impossible to define a blacksmith's *anvil* in mere words, so that the definition shall describe that object, and not apply to anything else. But by a lettered picture of an anvil accompanying the definition all may be clearly told. So most machines and parts of machinery, the form and structure of animals and plants, of leaves and flowers, and a multitude of other objects can in no way be so clearly defined as in connection with adequate pictures. No words can convey to the mind so clear an idea of the various orders of architecture, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, etc., as can be given by direct views of columns and capitals, palaces and temples. Study of the pictorial illustrations of a dictionary is study of definition in one of its most effective forms, in artistic presentation to the eye.

So used, by one who thus avails himself of all its various elements of power, the dictionary broadens the base of knowledge,—which is one of the prime objects of a liberal education. It calls the mind out in many directions, arousing and vitalizing faculties that might otherwise lie dormant or perish from atrophy. It tends to accuracy and definiteness, not allowing the student to satisfy himself with "about" and "perhaps". It tends to confidence and certainty. Where our dictionaries substantially agree we have a consensus of authority reaching through more than one hundred and fifty

years, counting from the publication of Johnson's dictionary in 1755. We may trust something to a century and a half of the best English scholarship. The case is like that of our currency, where we may rely upon the stamp of the mint and the imprint of the government printing-office and the approval of the great banking-houses through which it has come to us, without needing to weigh and test every coin and put every note under the microscope, knowing that the chance of a counterfeit is not one in thousands.

Worthy of especial note is the fact that intelligent use of the dictionary tends to form the habit of definition, one of the most important of mental activities. A perfect definition includes all that belongs to the matter defined, and excludes everything else. Every time one attains such a definition he has taken a long step toward general clearness of thought. Many a fierce and interminable dispute arises because the contestants are using the same words in different senses, when a clear definition would at once bring peace. Many a debate is won by the disputant who sees and holds fast a clear definition of the terms employed. That "division of the question" which often clarifies the action of a deliberative assembly is simply an act of clear definition, separating propositions that were previously confused. A clear style is due to that habitual accuracy of definition which leads the speaker or writer to express at every instant just what, and only what, he wished then and there to say. Rational mastery of definition reaches beyond the dictionary, becoming an important element of power in mind and life.

## CHAPTER VII

## ENGLISH CONNECTIVES—THE LINKS OF STYLE

There are certain words that express the great essentials of human thought, as objects, qualities, or actions; such are *nouns, verbs,* and *adjectives.* Such words must always make up the substance of language. Yet they are dependent for their full value and utility upon another class of words,—the thought-connectives,—that simply indicate relation; these are chiefly *prepositions, conjunctions, relative pronouns,* and *relative* or *conjunctive adverbs.* If we compare the nouns, adjectives, and verbs to the bricks that make up the substance of a wall, we may compare the thought-connectives to the mortar that binds the separate elements into the cohesion and unity of a single structure.

The value of these connectives may be clearly manifested by striking them out of any paragraph, and noticing the barrenness and confusion that result. Thus, by the omission of the thought-connectives, the first sentence of the Declaration of Independence becomes a mere cipher, needing a key for its interpretation; while by restoring them the meaning becomes luminous:

| | |
|---|---|
| The course human events becomes necessary one people dissolve the political bands have connected them another, assume the powers the earth the separate equal | *When in* the course *of* human events, *it* becomes necessary *for* one people *to* dissolve the political bands *which* have connected them *with* another, *and to* assume |

| | |
|---|---|
| station the laws nature nature's God entitle them, a decent respect the opinions mankind requires they should declare the causes impel them the separation. | *among* the powers *of* the earth the separate *and* equal station *to which* the laws *of* nature *and of* nature's God entitle them, a decent respect *to* the opinions *of* mankind requires *that* they should declare the causes *which* impel them *to* the separation. |

In this brief extract of seventy-one words, we have twenty-two connectives, which are all necessary in order fully and clearly to bring out the meaning of the sentence. It is the connectives that make English a language in distinction from a vocabulary. With all our nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs, we could not express a coherent thought of any fulness and range without connectives. Deprived of such helps, all speech would be made up of brief, isolated, and fragmentary sentences. This is seen in the so-called Gallic or French style sometimes adopted on the stage or in sensational novels: "He sees. He hears. He turns. He falls. He dies. All is over." This style may be very effective at moments in single passages, but it wearies, if long continued, and ultimately disgusts. As has been well said by an eminent critic: *

"No man can be supremely eloquent in laconics. You cannot express the rising and the expanding and the sweep and the circling of eloquent feeling in a style resembling that which seamen call 'a chopping sea.' For such thinking you must have at command a style of which an oceanic ground-swell or the Gothic interweaving of forest trees is the more becoming symbol. In the construction of such a style, you must use connective words, links elaborately

* Austin Phelps: "English Style in Public Discourse."

forged, inserted in the right joints of style, to make them flexible without loss of compactness. One word of such exact connective force in the right place, with the right surroundings before and after, may make all the difference between the disjointed and the linked style."

These connective words, "links elaborately forged" through centuries, are worthy of thorough and careful consideration such as students of language rarely accord them. In the continuous, connected style, the hearer or reader is privileged to advance along a firm, free path, instead of jumping from stepping-stone to stepping-stone, with many a risk of falling between. An incidental but important result of the endeavor to make the connection of thought clear to the person addressed is, that it compels the speaker or writer to make the connection clear to himself,—sometimes to ascertain whether there is any connection. If there is, it still becomes necessary to consider whether the ideas are related by similarity of nature, by succession in time, by the principle of cause and effect, or otherwise,—in order that one may know what connective word to employ. Careful connection thus tends to clear thinking. The gain so made is inestimable. Discourse loosely jumbled together differs from that compactly and skilfully joined as a tangle of loose threads differs from a woven garment, or a heap of steel-filings from a cannon-shot.

The English connectives have never yet been treated in their full range and extent, chiefly for the reason that their various uses are so many, and the shades of distinction between them often so fine, as to make it impossible to cover them all in any work of moderate size. Most of the great dictionaries, as "The New English Dictionary" (also called "Murray's" or "The Oxford Dictionary"), the "Century," the "Standard,"

and "Webster's International," give many notes of the prepositions used in various relations, especially after verbs, in connection with the definition of each particular verb; as, "to rely *on* or *upon*," etc. Maetzner's "English Grammar" gives several hundred pages to the treatment of connectives, with numerous illustrative quotations. Goold Brown, in his "Grammar of English Grammars", devotes much space to the treatment of these parts of speech. Fallows' "100,000 Synonyms and Antonyms" introduces twenty-six pages of very clear and interesting explanations of various uses of prepositions. "Connectives of English Speech,"* by the present author, discusses very fully the uses of these important words, and supplies very numerous quotations showing their actual employment in the best English literature.

But all such helps are only partial. The most that they can do is to make clear the chief lines of meaning of the various connectives and their ordinary use to express the principal relations which they indicate. Beyond this are a multitude of exceptional yet approved uses, which can only be learned as we learn the faces of friends and acquaintances, clearly identified through all varieties of expression which they may assume as influenced by the varying interests or emotions of life. Rules, definitions, and explanations can but start us upon true lines of differentiation. Then, beyond all these, we must depend upon the sympathetic and watchful study of the best literature of our language, and upon listening to the best speakers, both in conversation and in public address, to give the eye and ear the

* Connectives of English Speech. — The Correct Usage of Prepositions, Conjunctions, Relative Pronouns and Adverbs Explained and Illustrated. By James C. Fernald, L.H.D. Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York.

sure recognition of the appropriate connective and the swift, instinctive feeling of its fitness in any one of the innumerable exigencies of English speech.

### Prepositions

These are not, by many persons, thought of as connectives. The old-time grammarians looked only to the relation of the preposition to the word following it. Hence they disposed of it by the statement that "A preposition governs a noun or pronoun in the objective case." This is a rule derived from the Latin and Greek languages, where the preposition may be said to "govern" a following noun or pronoun, because it requires a change of form of that noun or pronoun into the genitive, dative, accusative, or other case. But no such rule holds in the case of any English noun, since the noun undergoes no change of form, whether it is the subject or the object of a verb, or the object of a preposition. In a few pronouns, indeed, a change of form appears, so that *I, we, thou, he, she, they*, or *who*, becomes *me, us, thee, him, her, them*, or *whom* when used as the object of a verb or of a preposition. But apart from this little list of pronouns, the preposition has no effect whatever upon the word it is said to "govern,"—except to show the relation of that word to some other word, which ordinarily precedes it in the sentence. The word preceding the preposition, either in place or in thought, and to which it refers back, is fittingly called its *antecedent*.

In the use of the preposition the word or phrase that precedes it in construction,—its antecedent,—is as important as that which follows,—its so-called object. If we say, "*to* New York," the question at once arises, "What *to* New York." Is it the road *to* New York,

the TRAIN *to* New York, the MAIL *to* New York, or is someone sending or going *to* New York. That preposition *to* is meaningless, until we know what comes before it in speech or thought. So, in every possible case, the preposition points backward as well as forward. Its least office is to limit the use of the word that follows it. Its chief value is in showing the relation of that word to some preceding term, thus binding the words together into that unity of thought that makes possible the coherent sentence. The preposition is a relation-word, and thus a true connective.

A true analysis of the force of this part of speech shows that its very name is a misnomer. The old Latin grammarians named it from an accidental quality. Because in Latin it must precede the word which it is said to "govern," they recognized this fact alone, and called it from the Latin *pre-*, "before," and *pono*, "place," the "preposition" or "word placed before." Then, when the attempt was made to construct English grammar on the model of the Latin, the scholastic grammarians said, "Why, *preposition* means placed before, and the preposition must always be placed before some other word; hence, it can never end a sentence." The tradition has been handed down, and in the schools of to-day teachers religiously insist upon the rule, "Never end a sentence with a preposition." The schoolboys' Anglo-Saxon language-sense rebelled at this, and they paraphrased the rule into "Never use a preposition to end a sentence *with*." And the schoolboys' instinct is right. There never was any sense in the "rule," and people go on using the prohibited idiom every day, for the reason that, though English contains numerous words derived from the Latin, yet the idiom of our language is Germanic, and the idiom is so interwoven with

the fiber of the language that no schoolroom instructions can get it out. If there is any usage a German delights in, it is to round out a sentence with a good vigorous preposition. The same usage has come down through English literature, and is frequent in the works of the foremost writers of our language. It is found in the Authorized Version of the English Bible:

Until I have done that which I have spoken to thee *of*.
—*Gen.* xxviii, 15.

Shakespeare uses it freely:

I have a letter from her of such contents as you will wonder *at*.—"Merry Wives of Windsor," Act III, Sc. 6.

There is no better way than that they spoke *of*.
—*Ibid.*, Act IV, Sc. 4.

Benjamin Franklin writes:

Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that is the stuff that life is made *of*.

Three things are men most likely to be deceived *in*, a horse, a wig, and a wife.

Addison writes:

A just and reasonable modesty does not only recommend eloquence, but sets off every great talent a man can be possessed *of*.—"Spectator," Vol. III, No. 231.

James Russell Lowell says of Garfield:

The soil out of which such men as he are made is good to be born *on*, good to live *on*, good to die *for*, and good to be buried *in*.—"Among My Books." Second Series.

If we use the relative *that*, we must carry the preposition to the end of the clause or sentence; as, "This is the book *that* I came *for*." It would, of course, be possible to say, "This is the book *for which* I came;" but

then we have not merely transferred the preposition, but we have wiped out the pronoun *that*. The "for which" style is eminently correct, but a trifle formal and prim. In free, off-hand speech or writing "the book *that* I came *for*" is natural and forceful, and in accordance with the best usage of the language.

It may be noticed, also, that there are certain prepositions which join very closely with certain verbs, so as virtually to form compounds, though the words are written separately; as, to *laugh at*, to *bring out*, to *clear up*, etc. In these, the preposition must always stay with its verb, whether at the end of the sentence or not. "That is a thing to be *laughed at*" is good English; "That is a thing *at which* to be laughed" is impossible. The virility and vigor of our language are shown in the obstinate persistence of this and various other forceful idioms that come down from ancient days and sweep over the prohibitions of grammatical theorists like a great river over a dam.

There is a real objection to a final preposition in certain cases, but that objection has nothing to do with the preposition. It is based on a principle that is rhetorical and not grammatical. There is a valid objection to the use of any small and unemphatic word at the close of a period, because that is the chief place of emphasis, and any insignificant word just there violates the fitness of construction. Thus the following sentence is faulty in conclusion:

"There is not, in my opinion, a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion than this, of the perpetual progress which the soul makes toward the perfection of its nature without ever arriving at a period *in it*."

You feel at once the drop in the style when that im-

pressive sentence ends with those two insignificant words "in it." And it is noticeable that the final word is *not* a preposition. Rhetorically we are concerned with the force and dignity of the ending, and not at all with the parts of speech involved. Any other small and unimportant word is as objectionable as the preposition in such a place. Such a sentence should be reconstructed.

Here it may be well to call attention to an undesirable form of construction known as "the splitting construction." Some authors would remodel the sentence just given by holding back the noun, and writing

"The progress which the soul makes *toward,* without ever arriving at a period *in,* the perfection of its nature."

Here the first member of the sentence is left incomplete—"the progress which the soul makes *toward*"—and that preposition, "*toward*", has no apparent object. You have to hold your breath, as it were, and wait till the next portion of the sentence brings around the object. The train of thought is stopped until a new passenger has got on, and only then are we permitted to proceed to our destination. This style (the so-called "splitting construction") may have at times the advantage of great definiteness and explicitness, especially in scientific or technical statements, but it is always somewhat harsh, and preferably to be avoided.

The task of prepositions in English is vast, and their work incessant, because all that is done by the many cases of nouns and pronouns in the inflected languages must in English be done for all nouns and for most pronouns wholly and solely by prepositions. For instance, the Greek, Latin, German, and some other languages have a dative case, expressing the relation of *to* or *for.*

The English has but one little remnant of the dative, appearing in such a sentence as,

"Give *him* the book."

We do not now call this the dative case, but the "indirect object." That a preposition is mentally understood here is evident from the fact that the moment we change the position of the words we must supply a preposition, as

"Give the book *to him.*"

To express practically all other relations of nouns or pronouns, which defy enumeration, we must depend upon prepositions. When we consider how many are these relations, and how delicate in many cases are the distinctions, we can understand the very great importance of the correct use of prepositions in English speech. The chief English prepositions are:

*About, above, across, after, against, along, amid* or *amidst, around* (which is virtually the same as *round*), *athwart, before, behind, beneath, beside* or *besides, between, betwixt, beyond, but* (in the sense of *except*), *by, down, during, ere, for, from, mid, midst* (which are the same as *amid* and *amidst*), *notwithstanding, of, off, on, upon, out, outside, over, round* (*around*), *since, through, out, till* (*until*), *to, toward, towards, under, underneath, until, up, upon* (*on*), *with, within, without.*

It is to be noted that these are all Anglo-Saxon, justifying the common statement that the warp or main substance of our speech is Anglo-Saxon. A few prepositions are of Latin derivation, as *except, past, save,* etc. We might add the Latin *per,* which is frequent in commercial use, and *via.* Of these it is to be said that the distinction is made that *per* may be used with a Latin

word but not with an English word. You may say *per diem,* but not *per day;* that undoubtedly is true in the first instance, but it is not a finality. *Per day, per yard,* so much *per hour,* have become very frequent in commercial use, and it is quite possible that the usage of *per* commercially may give it permanence as an English preposition to be used with English words. But the use of *per* with the object omitted, as "He gets 15 *per,*" meaning fifteen dollars a *week,* is simply and distinctively slang, and not to be tolerated.

There are also certain participial prepositions, as *concerning, considering, excepting, regarding, respecting.* Of these it is to be noted that *considering* is almost always deprecatory or depreciatory. You say "*Considering* his education he does very well;" "*Considering* the circumstances I will overlook the matter." There is always something to be abated when we say *considering.* We must now also accept as a preposition the word *pending,* though it is really a reversed participle. You say, "*pending* the receipt of orders." That means while the receipt of orders is "pending"; it is something you are waiting for. But *pending* has been taken out of this connection and made a preposition, *pending* the receipt of orders. Then there are prepositional phrases, as, *according to, in accordance with, on account of, because of, by means of, in default of, in consequence of.* These can be taken to pieces and parsed as separate words, but they are almost always used together and it is very natural to consider them as phrases having the force of *compound prepositions.*

The prepositions are difficult to define, because they denote relations so elemental that it is scarcely possible to state them more simply, and it is practically impossible to avoid using prepositions in the definition of prep-

ositions. Nowhere does the instinct of language count for more. The meaning and force of prepositions must be learned chiefly by context, by constant association of the words with phrases in which they are correctly used, until the mind chooses right with no thought of the reason why. The great thing that detailed study can do is to arouse the intellect to attention and watchfulness to catch the fine shades of distinction that are constantly flitting past. It is rarely possible to give exact models that can be followed by rote, because on the next occasion for use the phrase is likely to vary. The best models become suggestions, rather than patterns.

From time to time some well-constructed utterance shows strikingly what prepositions can do. How admirably has Byron, in his "Prisoner of Chillon," lit up his description of the "little isle" by the fine choice of prepositions:

"And then there was a little isle
Which *in* my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But *in* it there were three tall trees,
And *o'er* it blew the mountain breeze,
And *by* it there were waters flowing,
And *on* it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue."

Even more strikingly does this appear in Lincoln's world-famous phrase,

"Government *of* the people, *by* the people, *for* the people."

"*Of* the people":—The people are to be governed; for the order, safety, stability, and welfare of civilized society there must be "government *of* the people."

"*By* the people":—Who shall exercise that government over the people? Shall it be some external power, apart from themselves, and not responsible to them. No. The people themselves shall exercise it. Not kings or nobles, supposed to rule by divine right and by superior excellence and power, but the people themselves shall govern. Government *of* the people shall be *by* the people. They themselves shall rule themselves. "*For* the people":—Not in the interest of any dynasty, class, or clique, not for the advantage of their own chosen rulers, to make them rich and great,—but first, supremely and finally, to secure the happiness and well-being of the people themselves. This government *of* the people *by* the people must be in purpose, intent, and exercise *for* the good and advantage of the people,—"*for* the people". The wonderful power of the statement is that the three well-chosen prepositions concentrate and mass all this, so that the mind sees it at a glance, and remembers it forever. Three prepositions summarize the philosophy of free government, and by that summary have become immortal.

The correct usage of prepositions can not be finally determined by knowing their individual meanings. We must know also, and that by very close observation, their usual connections with nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. These are the more perplexing because they are subject to no definite controlling rules. A Danish scholar, learning English, wrote of a certain man, "I am disgusted *from* him." On being told he should say "disgusted *with* him," he resented the criticism, exclaiming, "No! I am not *with* him, but as far as I can get *away from* him;—I am disgusted *from* him." A fuller knowledge of the meaning of "with" might have helped this student; but if he had been then informed

that he might also say, "I am disgusted *by* his behavior," or "*at* his cowardice," he would doubtless have been still more perplexed. It is noticeable that while we use "glad *of*", we say conversely "sorry *for*," or "sad *at*". We speak of being "considerate or thoughtful *of*", but of being "sensitive *to*"; of being "careless *of*", but "indifferent *to*". Then, while the negative compound "indifferent" takes *to*, yet when we use the simple adjective "different," we say "different *from*."

Some have tried to establish the rule that the English preposition following a word must correspond with any Latin, Greek, or French preposition involved in the word as derived from another language. This works very well in certain cases. Thus *attract* is derived from the Latin *ad*, "to", and *traho*, "draw", and we say "attracted *to*." Yet even here we may also say "attracted *by*." But *abhorrent* is derived from the Latin *ab*, "from", and *horreo*, "shudder", yet we do not say "That is abhorrent *from* me," but "—— abhorrent *to* me." Depend is from the Latin *de*, "from", and *pendeo*, "hang"; yet it is only in a technical or closely literal sense that we speak of one object as "depending *from*" another; in constant figurative use we say "depend *on* or *upon*;" "I depend *on* his courage and loyalty". The etymological explanation breaks down, and this is as well, for etymology is too slow and minute to be a resource in ready speech and writing. We must know the associations of prepositions as matters of arbitrary, concrete fact, just as we know in the alphabet that *a* precedes *b*, or that *y* comes before *z*. A thorough knowledge of the meaning of each preposition is exceedingly helpful, but after all we are constantly driven back upon the fact that a certain preposition is to be

used in a certain connection because that is English usage. Turn as we will, there is no escape from the fact that English must be definitely and patiently learned as English.

The method recommended for attaining mastery of other elements of English is equally valuable here, viz.: much thoughtful reading of the best English authors. We read not merely words, but phrases, and certain phrase-forms then cling to our thought, so that any other connection of words would seem strange. If, as may often be the case, there is a reason for a different connection to express some varying shade of thought, we learn that by its very contrast with the more familiar. With such reading is to be joined the constant hearing of the best English speech to which the opportunities of life give us access.

The direct study of these connectives is of especial value by the fact that it calls attention to them, fixes the mind upon them, so that one learns to observe, instead of merely swallowing the correct style as a thirsty man drinks water. It would be well for any student to study up one preposition in the dictionary each day, noting all illustrative phrases or quotations there given, then looking for instances of the use of that connective in his reading for that day.

It will be found very interesting to study some particular verb, noting the prepositions by which it is commonly followed. This may readily be done by means of some one of the excellent concordances now easily accessible. Some concordance of the Bible is now in almost every home. Concordances of Shakespeare, Browning, Tennyson, etc., may be found in any good public library. Turn, for instance, to the verb *rejoice*. You will find at once that *rejoice at* has frequent and

approved use. We rejoice *at* something outside of or remote from ourselves.

Yea, the fir trees rejoice *at* thee (the fallen Babylon), etc.
—*Is.* xiv, 8.

As thou didst rejoice *at* the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate.—*Ezek.* xxxv, 15.

Or *at* something which is a mere occasion of joy:

They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice *at* the sound of the organ.—*Job* xxi, 12.

Rejoice *in* denotes intimate connection, participation, or sympathy.

I will rejoice *in* thy salvation.—Ps. ix, 14.
For our heart shall rejoice *in* him, because we have trusted in his holy name.—*Ps.* xxxiii, 21.
The Lord shall rejoice *in* his works.—Ps. civ, 31.

Shakespeare represents Brutus as making a coldly logical speech at Cæsar's funeral, in the course of which he observes:

As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate I rejoice *at* it.
—SHAKESPEARE: "Julius Cæsar," Act III, Sc. 2.

He fails to reach the phrase expressing hearty sympathy. He does not rejoice *in* Cæsar's good fortune as an interested friend, but *at* it, as an observant outsider. A certain church covenant has actually changed its old form that "we will rejoice *in* each other's prosperity" to "we will rejoice *at* each other's prosperity, and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear one another's burdens and sorrows." The "tenderness and

sympathy" would be far better intimated in the first clause by "rejoice *in*".

"Rejoice *over*" may denote appropriative or protecting triumph.

As the bridegroom rejoiceth *over* the bride, so shall thy God rejoice *over* thee.—*Is.* lxii, 5.

But sometimes "rejoice *over*" may be used to indicate hostile triumph, as of the warrior who stands above his fallen enemy.

Rejoice *over* her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.—*Rev.* xviii, 20.

Sometimes a similar idea, less triumphant, but more sharply hostile, is expressed by rejoice *against*.

Rejoice not *against* me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise.—*Micah* vii, 8.

As *in* denotes the object of sympathetic rejoicing, so *with* refers to the person or persons in sympathy with whom we so rejoice.

Rejoice *with* me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. —*Luke* xv, 6.

The object or cause of rejoicing may also be introduced by *because of, for,*—or in the older English by *of*.

The daughters of Judah rejoiced *because of* thy judgments, O Lord.—*Ps.* xcvii, 8.

Jethro rejoiced *for* all the goodness which God had done to Israel.—*Ex.* xviii, 9.

He rejoiceth more *of* that sheep than *of* the ninety and nine which went not astray.—*Matt.* xviii, 13.

The verb *wait* may be followed by *for* as expressing expectation or suspense.

Mine eyes fail while I wait *for* my God.—*Ps.* lxix, 3.

I waited patiently *for* the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry.—*Ps.* xl, 1.

But wait may also be used with *on* or *upon*. In modern usage this phrase *wait on* or *upon* is so largely used of attendance as a servant that many have come to think that the only meaning. But in higher sense *wait on* or *upon* is used as expressing dependence, confidence, trust:

The isles shall wait *upon* me, and *on* mine arm shall they trust.—*Is.* li, 5.

Art not thou he, O Lord our God? Therefore we will wait *upon* thee, for thou hast made all these things.—*Jer.* xiv, 22.

The eyes of all wait *upon* thee (*Margin,* "look unto thee"), and thou givest them their meat in due season.

—*Ps.* cxlv, 15.

The translators of the Revised Version seem to have almost completely ignored this English idiom. Without attempting to pass upon its accuracy as a matter of translation, it must be observed that their rendering has quite changed the meaning of some important passages. For instance, the Authorized Version gives:

But they that *wait upon* the Lord (in trustful dependence) shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.—*Is.* xl, 31.

This the Revised Version renders "they that *wait for* Jehovah." But this attitude of mere expectancy is not at home in the passage. People who are "waiting *for*" something or some one are not generally doing much. But this passage is full of vigor and activity. There is nothing passive or lingering in it. Waiting *on* a divine leader with trust and service is more in harmony with

the context than waiting *for* him in expectation and suspense.

### Conjunctions

Conjunctions may be regarded as the simplest of connectives, merely conjoining or joining together (Latin *conjunctio,* a "joining", from *conjungo,* "join together") words, phrases, or sentence. The joining of words by conjunctions is much less close and intimate than the joining by prepositions. When words are connected by prepositions, the grammatical relation of any noun involved is at once affected. If we say, "John went *to* James, *John* is the subject and *James* the object of the action, or, as we commonly say, *James* is "in the objective case" after the preposition. But if we say, "John *and* James went together," there is no difference in the relation of the two nouns; one is as much nominative as the other. If we say, "The man *with* his son is at the door," *son* is in the objective case after the preposition and can not be the subject of the verb, which is therefore singular, "is". But if we say, "The man *and* his son are at the door," both nouns are nominatives, and the verb is therefore plural, "are". In the sentence, "It is three thousand miles *from* New York *to* Liverpool," both *New York* and *Liverpool* are objectives after the prepositions *from* and *to,* and neither of those nouns could be the subject of a verb. But in "New York *and* Liverpool are three thousand miles apart," both nouns, New York and Liverpool, are nominatives, and form jointly the plural subject of the verb *are.* The difference is still more strikingly shown in pronouns, as "He *and* I are associated," or, "He is associated *with* me."

In the joining of words by conjunctions the paradox

appears that the unrestricted use of the conjunction seems to separate the words, emphasizing the individual items and protracting the enumeration, thus making it often more impressive.

O night
*And* storm *and* darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength.
—BYRON: "Childe Harold," Can. iii; St. 92.

East *and* west *and* south *and* north
The messengers ride fast,
*And* tower *and* town *and* cottage
Have heard the trumpet's blast.
—MACAULAY: "Horatius," St. 2.

The chains, *and* the bracelets, *and* the mufflers.—*Isa.* iii, 19.

*And* boy *and* dog, *and* hostler *and* Boots, all slunk back again to their holes.—IRVING: "Bracebridge Hall," p. 78.

For I have *neither* wit *nor* words *nor* worth,
Action *nor* utterance, *nor* the power of speech,
To stir men's blood.
—SHAKESPEARE: "Julius Cæsar," Act III, Sc. 2, l. 222.

It is very noticeable in this last quotation how recklessly Shakespeare has violated the supposed rule that "neither" can be used to distinguish only two objects. Shakespeare has here an enumeration of six objects beginning with "neither," and in which the correlative "nor" is used four times in succession.

On the contrary, the entire omission of the connective seems to join the words more closely, crowding the terms of the enumeration together—a method forcible by its very abruptness:

Love rules the court, the camp, the grove.
—SCOTT: "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," Can. iii, St. 2, l. 5.

Two horses have emerged from the ruck, and are sweeping, rushing, storming, toward us, almost side by side.
—HOLMES: "Our Hundred Days," Ch. 1, p. 54.

This method is to be sparingly used, as its too frequent employment gives a jerky effect, and seems to mark an undue straining after force. The familiar method of omitting the conjunction between all items of an enumeration except the last two is very convenient and effective.

> The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, *and* Fire
> Have dealt upon the seven-hilled city's pride.
> —Byron: "Childe Harold," Can. iv, St. 80.

> The mark is there and the wound is cicatrized only—no time, tears, caresses, *or* repentance can obliterate that scar.
> —Thackeray: "Henry Esmond," Bk. ii, Ch. 1, p. 144.

A pleasant variation is often found in joining the items of a series in pairs.

> A fairy realm; where slope *and* stream,
> Champagne *and* upland, town *and* grange. . . .
> Forever blend and interchange.
> —E. C. Stedman: "Bohemia," St. 6.

Conjunctions connecting words or phrases must connect those of the same class, as nouns with nouns, adjectives with adjectives, etc. Correlative conjunctions should be so placed as to apply directly to the words that are to be so connected. To say, "*Not only* a man rich *but* influential is required" is both awkward and obscure; the sentence becomes clear when the conjunctive phrase "not only" is correctly placed,—"A man *not only* rich *but* influential is required." A violation of this rule may be confusing or even ludicrous, as in the following:

> "NOTICE—The Shelleyville selectmen have enacted an ordinance which I am bound to enforce, that of prohibiting chickens from running around the streets at large, and riding bicycles on the sidewalk. J. Lindley, Constable."—(*Notice in the Shelleyville, Mich., Star.*)

Useful as is the work of conjunctions in joining words and phrases, it remains as one of their most important offices to unite sentences or propositions, sometimes uniting simple sentences into the greater whole of a compound sentence, sometimes extending their effect across a period, so that two sentences grammatically independent are united as parts of one continuous train of thought. So used, conjunctions have the effect of weaving not merely words, but thoughts, together. Here the conjunction does a work which the preposition can not do. Thus, "*If* you find the work hard, come to me, *and* tell me your trouble." Here the *if* introduces a conditional idea. On condition that you find the work hard, come and tell me. The *if* also expresses the condition as uncertain or hypothetical, implying that in case you do not find the work hard, you will have no occasion to come. The *and* joins the coming with the telling as two closely connected acts. Observe how abrupt and harsh the same remark would be without the conjunctions,—"You find the work hard. Come to me. Tell me your trouble."

As thus connecting sentences or propositions, a principal division of conjunctions is into coordinate and subordinate, the coordinate connecting propositions that stand as equal and independent; the subordinate connecting those of which one is dependent upon another. The chief coordinate conjunctions are:

*Also, and, both, but, either, neither, nor, or, then.*

These are further subdivided into Copulative and Disjunctive Conjunctions. Some add as a third class Adversative, but since the adversative are necessarily disjunctive, this further division does not seem worth while.

The typical copulative (i.e., linking, uniting) conjunction is *and*, which, in its most frequent use, simply adds one thing to another, or associates it with another. Yet *and* is capable of varying use, in which it becomes more than a mere plus sign. For example, it may denote one statement as the result or consequence of what has gone before; in which case *and* approaches the meaning of *accordingly, consequently,* or *therefore:*

> You bear a gentle mind, *and* heavenly blessings
> Follow such creatures.
> —SHAKESPEARE: "K. Henry VIII," Act II, Sc. 3.

> Enlist the interests of stern morality and religious enthusiasm in the cause of political liberty, as in the time of the old Puritans, *and* it will be irresistible.
> —COLERIDGE: "Table Talk," May 8, 1830.

> I was brought up in a New England village, *and* I knew . . . where all those things were that boys enterprise after.
> —BEECHER in Abbott's "Henry Ward Beecher," p. 15.

> We only know that God is just. *And* every wrong shall die.
> —WHITTIER: "At Port Royal," St. 15.

Hence the grotesque effect of using *and* with resultant suggestion, where such implication is not intended, as a Japanese experimenter with English wrote earnestly to his friend, "Don't fail to come to our house, *and* disappoint us."

Again, *and* may have almost adversative use, nearly akin to *but,* though with added force, on the principle that nothing brings out a contrast so strikingly as the mere placing of the contrasted objects or ideas side by side. White is seen with fullest distinctness against black. Thus:

> It is one thing to entertain, *and* another to be entertaining.
> —C. D. WARNER: "Little Journeys in the World," Ch. 13, p. 227.

I have brought you here to reason, . . . *and* wrangling is caddish.

—E. Lynn Linton: "Patricia Kemball," Ch. 20, p. 214.

In schools and colleges, in fleet and army, discipline means success, *and* anarchy means ruin.

—Froude: "Short Studies," *Kerry* in second series, p. 381.

It is by the observance of these finer distinctions that we gain the full advantage of the flexibility and vigor of our language, in contrast with the methodical and wooden correctness of those who learn only a few chief rules, and apply them undeviatingly upon every passage of prose or poetry that they fall upon or hew out.

Here may be noted the use of *and* with an added verb after *go, come, send, try,* etc., which some have censured. It has been assumed that *and* in such use is equivalent to *to,* and hence should be condemned as superfluous and incorrect. We have the familiar Puristic argument that because one expression can be used in a certain case, therefore it must always be erroneous to use any other expression in a like case;—because it is possible to say, "Come *to* see," therefore it must be wrong to say, "Come *and* see." But the latter usage is sustained by the highest authority, and when we come to balance the expressions, is sustained also by the logic of linguistic thought. If we change "Go *and* get it," for instance, into "Go *to* get it," there is an immediate loss of force. Why? Because "Go *to* get it" refers only to a purpose, which may never be fulfilled, while "Go *and* get it" contemplates the getting as the sure result of the going, which may therefore be viewed as an accomplished fact. Hence this idiom has a conclusiveness to be attained by no other form of expression.

They said unto him, Rabbi, . . . where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, come *and* see.—*John* i, 38.

He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go *and* see. —*Mark* vi, 38.

Go *and* shew John again those things which ye do hear and see.—*Matt.* xi, 4.

In rapid, emphatic utterance, the *and* of such expressions is often omitted; as, go, bring me my hat.

Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. —*John* iv, 29.

Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go, get it ready. —SHAKESPEARE: "King Lear," Act I, Sc. 4, l. 82.

Come, gentle dreams, the hour of sleep beguile! —LONGFELLOW: "The Child Asleep," St. 5.

*But* is the typical example of the disjunctive conjunction. It regularly connects ideas that are in contrast or contradiction. As it varies all the way from the slightest difference to the most decided antagonism, care must be taken to avoid its excessive use. Almost any sentence or paragraph that brings in a new view or an added thought may, if one so pleases, be introduced by *but,* until this may become the most frequent of all connectives, and have a harsh and jarring effect, so that one is fain to ask, "Must I be perpetually on the outlook for a contrast?" The style of a popular modern historian, which is for the most part singularly felicitous and often beautiful, is yet marred by the continual recurrence of *but* for almost any variation of thought. This may be obviated by using skilfully some one of the subordinate conjunctions, *although, though, however, nevertheless, notwithstanding.* Often the mildest concessive conjunction has a better effect than the sharply adversative *but.*

*But* is often used to introduce a substitute or an equivalent; as, "I can not pay you now, *but* (instead) I will give you my note at thirty days;"—"He could no longer reign, *but* (what might be an equal, or even a greater, achievement) he could die like a king." Hence the sudden shock when *but* in such connection introduces a great disparity, as when a rural real-estate agent writes: "The house has no bath-room, *but* it is provided with a large cistern and a fine deep well."

*But* after a negative has often the meaning of "otherwise than;" as, "I *can not but* believe that he will come (i.e., I can not believe *otherwise than* that he will come). With this is often confused a similar expression of quite different meaning, "I *can but.*" The latter usage is often supposed to be a mere abbreviation of the former, leaving out the *not*, and so preferable as briefer. In fact, *but* in the latter form ceases to be a conjunction, and has merely the effect of an adverb, equivalent to *only*. Thus "I *can not but* hope that he will come" means "I can not help hoping—I can not stop myself from hoping," etc., while "I *can but* hope" means "I can only hope," implying much less confidence, equivalent to "I can scarcely force myself to hope," etc.

We *cannot but* believe that there is an inward and essential truth in art.

—CARLYLE: "Essay on Goethe," Vol. I, p. 237.

The question of the nominative or objective form of the pronoun after *but* depends upon the consideration whether *but* is used in a given case as a preposition or as a conjunction. As a preposition, *but* would be followed by the objective, and we should say, "There is no other *but* HIM (i.e., apart from or besides HIM). But

the prevailing tendency in English now is to treat *but* in such use as a conjunction, however difficult it may be to fill the ellipsis, and to say, as the Authorized Version of the Scriptures says:

There is one God, and there is none other *but* he.

One familiar line of Mrs. Hemans' poem, "Casabianca," has been quoted on both sides:

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but *he* had fled,

Or,

Whence all but *him* had fled.

Which is correct? The line is printed differently in different editions of the poet's works that seem of equal authority. Some one has edited it. But which way? Or did the author herself change it in some new edition, and, if so, which way? Our own impression is that the pronoun is made nominative by attraction, from a confused feeling that it is the subject of the following verb, "had fled"—though we see on reflection that it is not, for "he" had *not* fled. Yet the impression is so strong that "*him* had fled" has the appearance of false syntax, though that is not the fact. At all events, the present tendency, and one long established, is to treat *but* in such use as a conjunction, taking the same case after it as before it:

No one escaped the wreck but *he;*
The wreck was fatal to all but *him.*

*Or—nor.*—Other prominent disjunctive conjunctions are *or* and *nor*. *Or* presents a simple alternative, but *nor* presents an alternative with vigorous negation. While *and* joins absolutely, *or* in joining keeps the line

of separation distinct. *Or* always suggests substitution. The ideas connected by *and* are both or all included in the enumeration; those connected by *or* exclude each other. "I will take this *and* that" means that I will take both; "I will take this *or* that" means that if I take one, I will leave the other. "Your money *or* your life" sharply announces that you cannot keep both.

"This *or* that," not "this *and* that" is the rule to which all of us have to submit, and it strangely equalizes the destinies of men.
—HAMERTON: "The Intellectual Life," Pt. iv, Letter v, p. 165.

Hence the great difference in grammatical construction between nominatives connected by *and* and nominatives connected by *or*. *And* pluralizes singular nominatives, so that they take a plural verb; as, "Time *and* tide WAIT for no man. *Or* separates the singular nominatives, which it at the same time connects, so that,—however many they may be,—each takes separately a singular verb; as, "A horse *or* a mule is needed for this work."

*Nor* is the necessary correlative of *neither*, but is not limited to that construction; any negative, as *not*, *no*, *never*, etc., may be followed by *nor*, when it is desired to make the opposition of elements vigorous and decisive. Thus *not* may be followed by either *or* or *nor*, but with difference of meaning, *nor* being more strongly adversative; as, "Will he not come *or* send (one or the other)?" but, "Will he not come *nor* send (and not even send)?"

NOT spoke in word, *nor* blazed in scroll,
But borne and branded on my soul.
—SCOTT: "Lady of the Lake," Can. iv, St. 6.

Let NOT our variance mar the social hour,
*Nor* wrong the hospitality of Randolph.
—JOHN HOME: "Douglas," Act IV, Sc. 1.

The appellations in common use are NOT applied with technical exactness, *nor* do they answer the ends of a philosophical explanation.
—PORTER: "Human Intellect," Pt. ii, Ch. 6, p. 351.

Spirit is NOT matter, *nor* matter spirit.
—C. HODGE: "Systematic Theology," Vol. I, Pt. i, Ch. 5, p. 379.

No Spring, *nor* Summer's beauty, hath such grace,
As I have seen in one autumnal face.
—JOHN DONNE: "The Autumnal," l. 1.

In this intense eagerness to press forward, he [Pestalozzi] NEVER stopped to examine results, *nor* to coordinate means with ends.
—Jos. PAYNE: "Science of Education," Lect. iii, p. 84.

The subordinate conjunctions are very numerous, as:

*although, as, because, except, excepting (that), for, however, if, lest, nevertheless, notwithstanding, provided, save, seeing, since, so, still, than, that, then, therefore, though, unless, whereas, whereat, wherefor, wherefore, wherever, whether, while, without.*

With these are joined certain conjunctive adverbs, often listed as conjunctions, viz.:

*after, before, hence, how, now, thence, till, until, when, whence, whenever, where, whereby, wherein, whereof, whereon, whereupon, whither, why.*

The limits of the present work do not allow of the separate consideration of these many items, all which will be found of interest, as well as of importance. As with prepositions, these conjunctions are relatively of more consequence in English than in a more highly in-

flected language, because they must completely fill the place of verb-changes which the English has discarded. For instance, the subjunctive mode has almost disappeared from our language and some conjunction must appear at the beginning of the clause to indicate the relation that might otherwise be shown by the form of the verb. In the older style, as of our Authorized Version of the Scriptures, we read:

> But, *be it so,* I did not burden you.—*II Cor.* xii, 16.

This style would now be unusual, and would seem somewhat formal and pedantic. We should perhaps write, "*If it was so,*" or "Granting *that* it was so." The connections of all dependent clauses must now be expressed largely by subordinate conjunctions, and the relations that these express, while always important, are often also of exceeding delicacy, refinement, and beauty. One who limits himself to a small number of the chief connectives misses these fine shades of meaning, and may himself be perplexed to understand why what is substantially correct in his own style is yet harsh, heavy, or discordant, as compared with the style of one who knows better how to weave his thoughts together by apt and fitting choice of the very connective that would express at every turn the nice shade of meaning these require.

As suggested for prepositions, the student will do well to take up one conjunction at a time (or two or three that are closely related), study that sufficiently to fix its use in mind, and be on the outlook for its recurrence. His own awakened attention and observation will do more for him than any precepts that can be given. As in the study of synonyms, it will be well at times to make enforced changes in some passage that

one admires, and see what the substitution of a different connective would do for it. Ordinarily one will find that this will involve a loss, either of power or beauty. Then it is incumbent upon him to discover why. The fault in our ordinary reading is that we slide over these links of style as we run a watch-chain through our fingers, without a thought of the delicate fitting of link after link. To become "a cunning workman," one must be able to observe just that,—to note thoughtfully the skilful work of the masters of style, until able to emulate their excellence.

### Relatives

The relative has more effect than any other part of speech in closely interlocking propositions or clauses. The conjunction stands somewhat apart from each of the connected clauses. But the relative is a part of the subordinate clause, linked with it in grammatical structure, while it also limits something in the principal clause, depends for its own meaning upon the principal clause, and often gives to the principal clause all the meaning that it possesses. Thus:

"Those may enter *who* are ready."

Without the relative, *those* means nothing; "those may enter"—we must still ask, who? On the other hand, without the principal clause, the *who* is almost meaningless. "Who are ready" by itself tells nothing, but when associated with the principal clause, that relative clause "who are ready" has the effect of an adjective limiting and defining *those;* "those who are ready (the ready ones)." In fact, we may telescope the relative clause within the principal clause, making the combination still

more manifest and vivid:—"Those *who are ready* may enter."

Hence the use of a relative to introduce a clause which is but slightly connected in thought with the principal clause, but which comes as a loosely attached afterthought, is always a fault of style. Such construction is false to the very ideal of construction by the relative pronoun. This blemish of style is technically designated as that of "the trailing clause." Of this the following clipping from a newspaper of the Far West may be given as an extreme example:

> The injured man's wounds were dressed by Dr. F. D. Brown, *who* was on his way to the hospital to see the Rev. W. H. Marks, *who* is seriously ill with typhoid fever, and it is thought he will recover.

This critical rule is not an impeachment of the "loose sentence," which, as used by Addison, Irving, and other masters of style, is capable of great elegance and force, all the dependent clauses that seem so lightly attached joining in one movement of thought as continuous as that of a picturesque stream, of which every wave and ripple adds its power and its touch of grace to the onward-flowing current.

The relatives, with one exception, are delightfully simple, because they have no gender, person, number, nor case, and hence can scarcely be grammatically misused. *Who* alone possesses the much-bewailed "lost inflections,"—or some of them—having a nominative, a possessive, and an objective case. Hence, when you encounter *whom* in an ordinary publication, you may be quite sure antecedently that it is misused. The rules for discriminating *who* and *whom* are, nevertheless, so simple that they can be mastered by a small part of the pains often taken to secure the wrong construction.

### Introductory Particles

The introductory particles, *it* and *there*, are also to be viewed as connectives. When we say, "*It* is a fine day," we do not think of any special antecedent of the pronoun "it," and when we say, "*There* is money enough in the bank," we do not think of the particular location of that "money." The "it" and "there" are used in such cases like the algebraic $x$ or $y$ simply to fill the place of some quantity not exactly specified, but to be supplied later. In such expressions as "*It* is pleasant weather," "*It* is I," the "it" simply holds the thought in expectancy for the coming predicate. In such expressions as "*It* is time to go," the "it" serves the same purpose.

In the phrase "*there* is," the word "there" is so independent of local suggestion that a local adverb, as "here" or another "there," may be added to give the local meaning which the introductory "there" fails to express, and we may say, "*There* is material *here*," or "*There* is a gate *there*," the final adverb keeping the local meaning which the introductory adverb has lost. The introductory "there" is more slightly pronounced than "there" denoting location.

*There* is a lad *here*, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes.—*John* vi, 9.

Because the close of the sentence is the most emphatic position the mind spontaneously endeavors to hold back any main item or extended phrase for that place of emphasis. It would be possible to say, "A lad who has five barley loaves and two fishes is here," but by that time the "lad" and his food-supply would have drifted somewhat out of prominence. But in the Scriptural text

the introductory *there* shows that something is to follow, and points onward so that the mind waits with expectant interest for the "lad" and his store to complete the statement. In the proverb, "There is no jesting with edge-tools," it would be very flat to say, "No jesting with edge-tools *is*." In the following sentence the introductory "It is" is of great service in throwing the important items on to the place of emphasis at the close:

"*It is* in general more profitable to reckon up our defects than to boast of our attainments."

—CARLYLE'S Essay on "Signs of the Times."

When attention is once fastened upon the English connectives it is surprising to note how wide is the range, and how various the relations of these links of style, and how much study is needed for their most effective use. Whoever will faithfully master the meanings, associations, and suggestions of these vital connectives will find a new interest in the delicate joining and grouping of elements that make up the mosaic of style, and will also gain increased power to utter clearly, vividly, and worthily the very thought he would at any time express.

## CHAPTER VIII

## ENGLISH GRAMMAR—THE FRAME OF STYLE

Every natural language was in use long before the compiling of its grammar. The earliest grammar known to the modern world is the Sanskrit grammar of Panini (about 300 B.C.), giving in eight books with three thousand sections, the rules for classical Sanskrit. But Panini himself enumerates sixty-four grammatical predecessors, and the oldest Sanskrit literature is conventionally placed at 1500 B.C., though undoubtedly much older. A language, however, must exist in a tolerably complete form before a literature can be composed in it, so that the Sanskrit language reaches beyond the earliest Sanskrit literature far back into a dim antiquity. The language had existed for unknown centuries, and had been the medium of a great literature for probably a thousand years before its grammar began. Greek grammar had an independent and later origin. The Homeric poems were the monuments it most eagerly studied. But those poems are placed at 900-1100 B.C., while the first notable, though disconnected, observations on grammar were made by Plato (427-347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). It was not until Dionysius Thrax ("The Thracian"), who taught in Rome in the first century B.C., composed his "Art of Grammar," that the grammar of the Greek language had full development. Thus again about a thousand years elapsed after the fulness and power of the Greek language had been revealed in the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," before grammatical analy-

sis was ready to explain what the language had long since done.

The grammatical work of the Romans was but an imitation of their Greek models. Varro in the first century B.C. produced a work of great value on the Latin language, and Priscian, about the close of the fifth century A.D., published his "Grammatical Commentaries," of which twelve were on inflection and two on syntax. This became the accepted authority on Latin grammar throughout the Middle Ages. But all that was greatest in Latin literature had been written long before.

The record of English grammar is similar, traced back to the "Bref Grammar for English" of William Bullokar, published in 1586, the "English Grammar" by Ben Jonson, issued in 1640, and the "Grammatica Linguæ Anglicanæ" of John Wallis, published in 1653. The earliest of these works was written five hundred years after the Norman Conquest, and two centuries after Chaucer had shown what the English language by itself could do.

Considered *a priori* we should at once say that nothing could be more rational, convenient, and desirable than a directory of the combinations of words, showing what words must mean when associated in certain ways, according to the custom, or, as we sometimes say, the "genius," of the language. How is it, then, that in English the word "grammarian" has become almost a term of reproach, and that "grammatical rules" have come to be considered an oppression and an abomination? This is due to the fact, just recorded, that in the early days a foreign grammar was imposed upon English, ready-made from without, and with practically no reference to what had grown up within the language. The fact that Chaucer and Gower had written widely popular tales and poems no more made English schol-

arly, in the view of the grammarians, than the popularity of moving pictures to-day would in an artist's view give them a place in classical art. Those famous poets and later English writers in verse and prose had done very well, the scholar would admit, considering the poor material in which they had to work. But English was still in his view an inferior language, "the vulgar tongue," toward which the scholar must exercise such patience as he could. Even Lindley Murray in his English Grammar of 1795, contrasts English with "the learned languages," which for him were notably the Greek and Latin.

The Latin, especially, was the beloved language of English scholars. The work which an Englishman might write in Latin could be read by any scholar in France, Germany, or Italy, Sweden, Denmark or Spain. In that language he was at home in the "Republic of Letters." Bacon in 1620 wrote his "Novum Organum" in Latin, as did Harvey in 1628 his work on the "Circulation of the Blood." When the scholars turned to English they missed almost everything that made Latin grammar a certainty and a delight. As English was evidently determined to live, they agonized to shape it to the Latin model. It must have genders, persons, numbers, cases, and conjugations, wherever the Latin had them, or the want of these must be explained or apologized for, and words or whole clauses must be "understood," to show what the expression would have been in the nobler and more orderly Latin. It was taken for granted that the English had failed of this only because it was unable, as yet, to obtain it. Everything possible must be done to hasten the reshaping of the native speech to the Latin perfection.

In England the very name of "grammar school" sig-

nified a school where the chief studies were Greek and Latin, predominantly Latin, as more strictly the language of western Europe. So far as English was thought worthy of any attention whatever, it was with the undeviating purpose of remaking it to fit the Latin scheme. Hence, there was constant strain and friction between the living, vigorous, hustling language and the antique and immobile frame into which it was determined to thrust it. We can hear the language struggle and groan and the joints of the frame-work creak wherever the attempt is persisted in, to this day. Thousands of students gave up the study except as compelled to go through perfunctory recitations, and those who attempted to write or talk according to the book were given up by the rest. At length, in the nineteenth century, and especially in America, teachers awoke to the fact that the results of this system bore no proportion to the time and labor bestowed on the instruction. Then there was a general revolt against grammar as such. Many schools abolished the very name, and substituted "language" lessons, not seeing that they were trying to do without a system the very thing that the discarded English grammar had tried to do by a false system. Then we had "inductive methods," in which the poor callow things of eight to fourteen years of age were to study out and discover in a few hours of their school course the evolution of centuries. Out of all these complicated failures there has grown up in many minds the persuasion that what is called "English grammar" is an outgrown superstition, a fiction, or a joke. Some instructors in English have affirmed that "Grammar is simply good common sense," or that "Good grammar is simply speaking so as to be understood."

Such a solution utterly breaks down under the test

of fact. A recent paper gives the repartee of a colored shopper with a dealer of her own race. "Is dese aigs fresh?" she asks. "I ain't sayin' dey ain't," is the reply. To which she answers, "I ain't askin' you, Is dey *ain't;* but, is dey *is. Is* dey?" Here certainly was good sense. The analysis of the subject would do credit to an accomplished debater:—"I am not asking what they are not, but what they are. Are they as specified?" As to "being understood" this dialectic statement is perfectly intelligible. Yet its violations of grammar are too many to enumerate. The prevalence of such a style would hopelessly corrupt and degrade the language.

Now, what is that thing called "grammar," which is thus violated? It is the immemorial usage of the language regarding the connection of words, as established by consensus of its best writers and speakers through all the past. Changes have come from period to period, but yet, on the whole, an essential unity has characterized the English language for five hundred years. Its best writers and speakers have been persons of clear and vigorous thought, and, in the main, of good taste and fine feeling. They have been most competent to decide what constructions should live, and their approval and use have fixed those constructions in the language. Where they have agreed that a plural form of the verb, for instance, should be used, we should do ill to set aside that agreement and employ a singular form. Those masters of style have given elegance and dignity to certain constructions, so that on the edge of the ungrammatical there is always a zone of the inelegant and undignified, which, if not explicitly to be condemned, is yet to be avoided. All these conditions are violated by the dialectical quotation given above, in spite of the fact that it expresses good sense, and can be readily under-

stood. Good sense and intelligibility do not by themselves constitute good grammar.

There are others who say, "People who have been brought up in good society speak properly without ever thinking of grammar." Without discussing to what extent this statement may be true, the fact is at once evident that it provides for an exceedingly small part of the English-speaking world. In fact, it seems rather snobbish, saying in effect, "If you are one of US who have had certain advantages, you will need no grammar. If not, there is probably no help for you." But even admitting that there is a formative power in the usage of cultured society to impress proper habits of speech without direct instruction, the question arises: cannot its governing principles and accomplished facts be systematized and reduced to orderly statement that can be learned by people who have not had access to the charmed circle? Is there not some grammatical salvation for the mass of men? A book or a system that would put the English usage of cultured society in a shape to be learned by the general public would be an English grammar of a high order and of practical value. To meet such demands, the traditional system of English grammar needs to be stripped of very much that in the course of centuries has accumulated around the essential grammar of the language. It is helpful to consider what grammar is not.

1. Grammar is not rhetoric. Some grammars are still encumbered with "figures of speech," with which grammar has nothing to do. If the Scripture says, "God is a rock," rhetoric informs us that this is a *metaphor,* which is a very useful classification. But grammar knows nothing of such a distinction. Grammatically that sentence is exactly like the literal sentence, "God

is a spirit." Each has a subject, a verb, and a predicate nominative. If those are correctly used and placed, the work of grammar is done, as much for the one sentence as for the other. If one says of some disreputable character, "He is a fine fellow," that is a use of a rhetorical figure called *irony*. But grammatically it is a simple sentence, with subject and predicate correctly joined. There its grammatical treatment ends. Rhetoric may do with it what it will. Why try to jam grammar and rhetoric together in one lesson, any more than grammar and geometry?

2. Grammar is not metaphysics or philosophy. Many English grammars contain explanations or classifications that are wholly metaphysical. Such discriminations may be very keen and elegant, considered as metaphysics, but in no way help to mastery of the actual facts of grammar, which would be the same without them. We need not decide whether a piece of metaphysics is good or bad, acute or absurd. It is enough that it is not grammar, and should be ruled out of a grammatical treatise.

Numerous grammars, for instance, laboriously carry the distinction between abstract and concrete or material nouns. Metaphysics may have some use for the distinction, but the English language knows nothing of it. It treats the so-called abstract nouns like *mercy, hope, fear, joy,* precisely as it treats *air, water, rock,* and *tree,* which are called *concrete* or *material nouns.* But we are told "abstract nouns have no plural." Yet we speak just as freely of *mercies, hopes, fears, joys,* as of *airs, waters, rocks, trees.* "Oh, but," we are told, "when an abstract noun is used in the plural, it ceases to be an abstract noun, and becomes concrete." Here the average intellect gives up. As to abstract nouns becoming concrete, when used in the plural, it still seems to us that

*liberties* are more abstract than *potatoes*. This is a good example of the result of inflicting metaphysics upon grammar. Why should a grammatical student spend one moment on such distinction, when he can place and connect his words without it, and without ever having heard of it?

3. Grammar has nothing to do with the truth of propositions nor with the good sense or nonsense of what is uttered. The "Mother Goose" rimes are for the most part perfectly grammatical. Take this description of an ancient Pacifist:

> "There once was a man who said, How
> Shall I flee from this horrible cow?
> I will sit on the stile and continue to smile,
> Which may soften the heart of this cow."

What possible grammatical fault is there in that stanza? Or, again, it is perfectly grammatical to say or write, "The moon is made of green cheese." Subject, verb, and predicate are all properly connected, which is all that grammar requires. It is perfectly grammatical to say, "Light is the same as darkness," or, "The sum of the three angles of any triangle is equal to three right-angles." However false these statements may be, the words are properly connected, which is all that grammar requires. Yet one will still hear teachers saying, "Oh, that would not be grammatical, because it would not be good sense," or, "—because it would not be true." On the contrary, there is no way so good to detect falsehood, sophistry, or absurdity, as to have it stated with strict grammatical accuracy. If there is grammatical error, you may think the fault is there. But if the grammar is perfect, the fault must be in the thought expressed. The old arguments for the Divine Right of Kings were

often most perfect in form of statement. For that very reason they could be refuted, because there was something clear and definite to answer. Let grammar do its own work, and be charged with nothing more.

"But, after all," says the objector, "is it not interesting to treat these other things? Are we not giving the pupils that much more, and making grammar a richer study for them?" Well, here is a business man who wishes to have the accounts of office-expenses always accessible, so that he may turn at any moment to any item. His stenographer sees that there is room to spare in the file-case, and puts in transportation charges, interest on loans, bills receivable and bills payable, etc., and says, "See how much richer the content of that file-case is now! What a number and variety of matters it includes!" Or shall the professor lose the opportunity to include some General History in his Chemistry, or some excellent Theology in his Analytical Geometry? The departments of business are not more closely segregated than the departments of study now are, and in that segregation there is power. Most of the intricacy, complication, and perplexity of the majority of English grammars would be removed at a stroke by cutting out of English grammar all that does not relate directly to English grammar. That eminent scholar of the nineteenth century, George P. Marsh, declared:

"A truly philosophical system of English syntax cannot be built up by means of the Latin scaffolding, which has served for the construction of all the Continental theories of grammar, but must be constructed and executed on a wholly new and original plan." *

Our first constructive principle must be that English grammar is the grammar of the English language,—a

* "Origin and History of the English Language," Lect. 1, p. 22.

language which has started new in the world, built upon a model of its own, and which is not shaped, and is not to be shaped, to the pattern of any other;—which has vindicated its right to an independent existence by a noble and honored literary history of five hundred years, and has demonstrated its utility as a medium of communication by becoming the vernacular of one hundred and fifty millions of men, almost one-tenth of the world's population. The language must make and control the grammar. All questions of English grammar are thus questions of established fact. We have only to inquire, "What do English-speaking people mean to express by words in a certain combination?" and "What do English-speaking people understand to be expressed by that combination, when they read or hear it?" That is for the English language final, ultimate fact, and a systematized statement of all facts that can thus be collected is the whole of English grammar.

English grammar, then, is simply a systematized and comprehensive statement of the facts of approved English usage. Oftentimes a disputed question of grammar can be no better settled than by turning to the *Oxford* (Murray's) *Dictionary,* following down the citations from approved English authors of all centuries since the Anglo-Saxon day, and accepting their consensus of usage as the law or "rule" of the language. Some other book of citations may accomplish the same purpose. If the study is adequate, the student has found the "rule" of English grammar on the point in question. A number of such established facts may establish a controlling principle of English usage. Since "rules" have been so often imposed arbitrarily and unreasonably in the past, it seems better to speak of the facts and principles of English grammar, rather than of its rules. Study

of many instances will enable one to find a certain analogy of English usage, which is often helpful, but must be followed with caution, since the language, like every vigorous speech, reserves the right at times to break away in an idiom, which becomes good usage simply because it gets into such general use.

English accepts the eight parts of speech common to the Indo-European languages:—*noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction,* and *interjection.* The wide prevalence of this classification would indicate it to be at once natural and rational. The *noun* stands as the name of any object, whether material or immaterial, existing in the outer world or only in the world of thought; the *pronoun* has place on fitting occasion as a substitute for a noun, whether as representing some particular noun, or as taking a place which a noun might hold; the *adjective* describes or in some way limits the meaning of a noun or pronoun; the *verb* is the action-word, even when it specifies state or condition carrying a suggestion of mental movement, so that "matter exists" has a different force from "the existence of matter"; the *adverb* is to the verb what the adjective is to the noun, or it may carry its descriptive or limiting power to shade the meaning of an adjective or even of another adverb; the *preposition* connects words so as to show a dependence of one upon the other in meaning; the *conjunction* connects words by mere juxtaposition, or connects sentences so as to bring out the most varied, and often the most delicate, shades of dependence or other relation; the *interjection* is mere formless and disconnected utterance of emotion.

While English thus has the same parts of speech with the other languages of its group, it has one way of using them which is quite distinctive. The same word may

cross from one part of speech to another with the utmost freedom. The noun may be used as an adjective; as, a *gold* watch, *silver* hair, a *steel* bar, an *iron* ring. Or the noun may be used as a verb; as, to *man* a ship, to *arm* a man, to *bridge* a river, to *sample* sugar, to *railroad* a bill, to *nail* the flag to the mast. Sometimes an added preposition helps to this verbal force of the noun; as, to *board up* a fence, to *fence off* a lot, to *brick up* a wall. Such use is so readily intelligible that children readily make new transfers of their own, like the little boy who called out, "Father, the cow *tailed* my hat *off*." The adjective may be used as a noun; as, to return *good* for *evil*, "The *rich* and the *poor* meet together." The preposition may be used as a noun; as, the *outs* always oppose the *ins;* or as a verb, as "*Down,* soothless insulter! to *down* the enemy; *up* with it! *out* with him!" This freedom and flexibility of English result from the fact that no part of speech has any fixed forms in which it must appear. Noun, adjective, verb, etc., may terminate with any letter or any combination of letters, so that any word may be transferred at pleasure from one part of speech to another, and be instantly at home in its new connection. In Latin this could in no wise be done. If we were to connect the Latin words *pons,* "bridge," with *flumen,* "river," and say *pons flumen,* that would not only not mean "to bridge a river," but it would not mean anything. This is but one instance of the incongruities that make English construction upon the Latin model impossible and hopeless. English can do what the Latin cannot do, and we may be very glad of it.

### Nouns

Nouns are credited with the properties of gender, person, number, and case.

*Gender.*—This attribute has been quite fully discussed in the opening chapter on "The Simplicity of English," where it is shown that the uniform tendency of the English language is to minimize gender in nouns, not more than about one hundred and fifty nouns being distinguishable as masculine or feminine and not one noun being recognizable as masculine, feminine or neuter by its form. Of the once numerous feminine nouns formed after the French analogy in *ess,* most have disappeared and others are constantly falling into disuse. It is not now good form to say or write "authoress," "poetess," "songstress," etc. We refer to the woman as to the man as "author," "poet," "singer," etc. The genius of the language tends strongly to the disuse of any distinctively masculine or feminine terminations. We have already remarked the vast number of nouns like *companion, friend, neighbor, parent, child, bird, fish,* etc., denoting living beings, but with no indication of sex or gender. The entire tendency of the English language is to minimize gender in nouns, as in other parts of speech.

*Person.*—Person in English nouns is practically negligible. A noun cannot be in the first person without a pronoun of the first person accompanying it; as, "I, *Paul,* say unto you"; "We, *the people,* do ordain and establish this constitution." All nouns are of the third person, unless an accompanying pronoun or other special indication marks them as of first or second.

*Number.*—Number in nouns, as singular or plural, is indicated with special care. On the threshold we meet a conflict of definitions, some authorities defining the plural as "denoting more than one"; others as "denoting two or more." Between these definitions come certain fractional quantities. Shall we say, "One and a half ton was delivered," or "One and a half tons were

delivered''? The prevailing usage is certainly in favor of the latter form, and the best modern dictionaries define the plural as ''denoting more than one.''

The common or regular form of the plural is obtained by adding *s* to the singular, or—after a sibilant sound, as where a word ends in *ch, s, sh, x,* or *z,*—adding *es,* for the sake of euphony, as in *churches, bushes, gases, foxes,* etc. The *es* in such cases forms a separate syllable. That the *e* inserted in these forms is euphonic is shown by the fact that an *e* is pronounced in the possessives of the same words, where none is written. Thus, *fox's* (possessive) is pronounced precisely like *foxes* (plural). Some care and pains must be taken to master the very small list of irregular plurals and the somewhat larger number of foreign plurals, which are, nevertheless, not numerous. Some are perplexed over nouns in *y* till they learn the very simple rule that if the *y* is preceded by a vowel, the plural merely adds *s,* but if no vowel precedes the *y* is changed to *ie* before adding *s;* as, *valley, valleys; lady, ladies.* Nouns in *o* will probably always be somewhat of a vexation, since they form their plurals in *s* or *es* by no certain rule; as, *canto, cantos; echo, echoes.* But these are not so numerous as greatly to worry a person who is willing to take a little pains.

*Case.*—Case in English nouns is very slightly indicated. There are but two case-forms, and but one change of form for case in either the singular or the plural. How is it, then, some will ask, that nouns are said to have three cases,—nominative, possessive, and objective? Because we call the ordinary, unchanged form of the noun either nominative or objective at pleasure. No one can say of the word *man* standing alone that it is nominative or objective. It may be either according to its relation to other words, and this is indicated almost

entirely by its position in a sentence, that is to say, by the order of words. Nominative or objective case indicates not a form but a relation of the word so designated. The possessive case is indicated by a change of form, which may be very slight, adding *s* preceded or followed by an apostrophe, according to a method so simple that few persons are ever perplexed by it,—or in some instances, as of plurals in *s*, adding an apostrophe only; as, the *foxes'* den.

### Pronouns

The pronoun is looked upon as the stronghold of inflection in English. Yet it is surprising how little is there. We proudly boast of one declension—the only one in the English language which contains all the properties of gender, person, number and case—the personal pronoun of the third person, expressed in the nominative singular by *he, she,* or *it*. But we are suddenly awakened to the fact that this one lonely declension is not complete, for gender vanishes in its plural, and for *he, she,* or *it* we have the one genderless plural *they, their, theirs, them.* In fact, at this point we have used up our entire stock of gender. *I* and *thou, we* and *you* are genderless. So are all other pronouns, as *who, which, that,* etc. A few pronouns, *this* and *that, one, other,* etc., have number, but no person, gender, nor case. One pronoun, *who,* has a full set of cases (*who, whose, whom*) but no gender, person, or number. The pronoun *who,* in all its forms, is as indifferent to singular or plural as the noun *sheep.* The wonderful thing is how well we get along without the many variations which the language has discarded, and how well English seems to be equipped in the matter of pronouns, with so few forms to respond to actual count.

### Adjectives

The English adjective has the freedom of the atmosphere. No variation for gender, person, number or case. *Good, bad, fast, slow, light, heavy, precious, worthless,*—any such English adjective, once learned, is yours for all time. Like a pass-key, it fits equally in every lock. If you wish to vary the degree of the quality, you may change to comparative or superlative. Otherwise your adjective, once learned, is yours in perpetuity. How much this means only he can understand who has stood with a disconnected French, German, Spanish, or Italian adjective suspended in mid air, finding himself wholly unable to fit it to the waiting noun.

But because it is free from the bondage of inflection, the English adjective comes under the law of position, and must be placed so near its noun that the relation is unmistakable. The practical ease and certainty with which this is done in innumerable instances is the sufficient vindication of construction by position. The matter is so simple, that if ever an adjective is made meaningless or incongruous by misplacement, we laugh at the false construction as a bit of ineptness that ordinary care might have avoided.

### Verbs

English verbs may be said to constitute one great conjugation, forming its past inflected forms by adding *ed.* As this class includes almost all the 8,000 or more English verbs, this is called the regular formation. Outside of these is "a little wilful group" of about 200 verbs, each of which forms its past tense and past participle according to a fashion of its own; as, *do, did, done; fly, flew, flown; see, saw, seen.* These have been

called by Grimm and certain other German philologists "strong verbs," for reasons satisfying to the Teutonic mind—apparently because they are incorrigible—leaving the immense mass of English verbs as "weak verbs." A few English grammarians have accepted this title, though with many protests, an increasing majority terming verbs of the prevalent and usual form *regular* and the few anomalous survivors *irregular*. With these 200 irregular verbs there is absolutely but one thing to do—learn them "by heart"—by arbitrary memory. There is no royal road around or past them. Learning these few forms is not a great job. By learning ten irregular verbs a day all may be mastered in three weeks, and the work is done for all time, for there will never be any more. In fact, their number tends steadily to diminish. We may now say *builded* for *built, clothed* for *clad; bereaved* is more common than *bereft,* and *dared* has supplanted *durst.*

This slight array of old-time forms disposed of, the way through the verb opens very clearly. Eight little monosyllabic auxiliaries, each practically unchangeable in its own domain, point the way to all the relations indicated by the hundreds of verb-forms of the Latin, Greek, and many other languages. Some of these auxiliaries, *be, can, do, have, may, must, shall, will,* associate with themselves the pure infinitive, that is, the unchanged root-form of the verb without the sign *to;* as, "I will go", "he may come", etc. Others join themselves to the past participle, regular or irregular, of the verb, forming thus a verb-phrase with special indication of time, intention, certainty, possibility, or the like; as, "I have done"; "the book is finished". These are found in actual fact to afford combinations sufficient to cover all the innumerable variations of human

thought or opinion to be expressed by the use of the verb.

### Participles and Verb-Phrases

The participle is a wonderful contrivance of language for carrying over the idea of the verb into close and vivid connection with other words, to modify a noun, to take an object, or to be itself the subject or the object of a proposition. The participle expresses the idea of a verb otherwise than as a predicate; it might be called the non-predicable verb, or most fittingly "the participial mode of the verb," having three tenses, present, past, and perfect.

Any participle may be used as an adjunct of subject or predicate without forming a separate clause as a finite verb would do, in a similar connection of ideas. Thus: "Hoping you are well, I remain, etc." This is much less formal than "I hope you are well, and I remain, etc." So, "Having seen his friends, he departed," is used in place of "He saw his friends, and departed;" or "Being found trustworthy, he was promoted," instead of "He was found trustworthy, and was promoted." The thoughts expressed in the participial form are more closely woven with the associated matter, and have greater unity. But associated with one of the auxiliaries, such a participle makes a definite affirmation and forms a coherent sentence; and this is the most common way in English of expressing affirmation, opinion, possibility. The easy interweaving of the auxiliaries with the infinitive or participle in verb-phrases forms a mosaic of wonderful power, fluency, fulness and beauty, adapted beyond all that would be antecedently thought possible to the expression of the subtle variations of thought.

ADVERBS

There has appeared from somewhere in recent years the edict that no adverb or other word shall appear within the limits of a verb-phrase, i.e., between the auxiliary and the participle representing the principal verb. Many of our younger writers are laboriously endeavoring to observe this, directly against the genius and usage of the language; so that we have such nerve-racking sentences as, "The conspiracy never previously *had been suspected;*" "The investment irrecoverably *will be lost;*" "The speaker furiously *was interrupted.*" Sometimes the attempt to observe the requirement puts an adverb in a place where it becomes confusing, as in the following:

"The old French cruiser Chateaurenault was torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean, and the submarine which attacked her later *was destroyed,* etc."

—*The New York Tribune,* Dec. 20, 1917.

We have heard many desperate deeds of submarines, but this of going down and attacking "later" a ship that had been already sunk surpasses all.

There seems to be nothing behind the rule but someone's *ipse dixit.* The entire trend of English usage is against it. The one adverb most frequent in negation, the adverb *not,* almost uniformly breaks the verb-phrase; as, "I *have* not *seen* him"; "I *will* not *do* it"; "I *do* not *believe* it"; "the package *has* not *come.*" It is only a very ill-taught foreigner who says: "I *not* have seen him"; "I *not* will do it"; "the package *not* has come." This adverb *not* is very apt to carry with it any associated adverb, also, into the place between the auxiliary and the form of the principal verb; as, "I *shall* not soon *forget* your kindness". Compare this with, "I soon *shall* not *forget* your kindness"; or,

"I *shall* not *forget* soon your kindness". *Never* tends to the same position as *not;* as, "I *have* never *met* him"; "I *have* never *heard* so strange a tale"; "He *will* probably never *return*".

Again, in questions, the subject, noun or pronoun, naturally and almost inevitably comes between the auxiliary and the principal verb; as, "*Will* you *go*"? "*Did* he *say* that"? The subject, so placed, very commonly carries with it any attributive words; as, "*Has* that excellent and estimable man *been* so *deceived*"?

The fact is that the language is not nearly so wooden as many of its expositors. It trusts the auxiliary to pick up its principal verb in almost any part of the sentence, whatever may have come between, and this is readily done by all intelligent people. Moreover, the association of the adverb or qualifying phrase is very rarely with the auxiliary, and almost always with the principal verb. If one says: "He *constantly* has been—"; "That *justly* will be—"; "This *strenuously* must be—"; those adverbs have practically no force whatever. But if we fill out the sentence, and say, "He has been *constantly misunderstood*"; "that will be *justly administered*"; "this must be *strenuously insisted* upon"; then "constantly misunderstood," "justly administered," "strenuously insisted upon" have definite and vigorous meaning, because each adverb is closely joined to the principal verb which it is of interest and consequence that it should modify. Suppose one inspects a body of troops, and finds the clothing defective; he may easily sum up the result without forming a sentence, and say "insufficiently clothed"; but if he starts to form a sentence, "The *men insufficiently*" means nothing, and "The men *insufficiently were*" still means nothing; he may say, "The men insufficiently

were clothed," but in so doing he has separated his adverb from the one vital element which it must modify if the sentence is to mean anything, and has secured by much labor a forced construction, which is elaborately obscure, because the only way the reference of an adverb can be known in English is by its *position*, as near as possible to the word it is to modify. But if he says, "The men were *insufficiently clothed*," he has massed his meaning with compactness and cohesion, so that the reader or hearer gets the whole idea at a stroke. Such English is both easy and natural, and has been favored throughout the whole course of English literature. In fact, the natural adjustment of the auxiliary to its principal verb across any intervening words is so commonly required and so readily made that it is hard to gather specimens of it, the mind slipping down the stream of such fluent construction so readily as not to note any break in the movement. Let us consider a few passages that have been hastily gathered from the Authorized Version of the Scriptures:

*Gen.* ii, 16-17. Of every tree of the garden thou *mayest* freely *eat:* But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou *shalt* not *eat* of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou *shalt* surely *die.*

Would it improve this to write, "Thou *surely* shalt die," or "*Surely* thou shalt die?"

2 *Sam.* ix, 7. I *will* surely *shew* thee kindness.

*Prov.* xxix, 1. He that *being* often *reproved,* hardeneth his neck, *shall* suddenly *be destroyed,* and that without remedy.

*Is.* xxiv, 3. The land *shall* be utterly *emptied.*

*Jer.* xlii, 10. If ye *will* still *abide* in this place.

*Ezra* iv, 18. The letter which ye sent unto us *hath been* plainly *read* before me.

*Acts* ii, 8. Nothing common nor unclean *hath* at any time *entered* into my mouth.

*Rev.* xxi, 27. And there *shall* in no wise *enter* into it anything that defileth.

Or, again, from Shakespeare:

*III King Henry VI,* Act i, Sc. 2. While you *are* thus *employed.*

*Ib.,* Act i, Sc. 4. 'Tis beauty that *doth* oft *make* women proud.

*Ib.,* Act ii, Sc. 1.

And he that throws now up his cap for joy
*Shall* for that fault *make* forfeit of his head.

*King Richard III,* Act iii, Sc. 1.

For we to-morrow hold divided councils
Wherein thyself *shalt* highly be *employed.*

*Ib.,* Act ii, Sc. 2. I know they do, and I *have* well *deserved* it.

*King Henry VIII,* Act i, Sc. 2.

I *have* no farther *gone* in this
Than by a single voice.

From the "Spectator" illustrations become so numerous that we may content ourselves with quoting a few from a single paper by Addison (Vol. viii, No. 387):

But *having* already *touched* on this last consideration, I *shall* here *take* notice, etc.

We *may* further *observe* how Providence has taken care, etc.

I *shall* not here *mention* the several entertainments of art.

This interspersion of evil with good *is* very truly *ascribed,* etc.

Similar illustrations may be found on almost any page, and in the work of any one of that brilliant corps of "Spectator" writers. From Macaulay we may select the following, which occur in the essay on Lord Bacon:

His fine *was* speedily *released* by the crown. He *was* next *suffered* to present himself at court.

Our opinion of the moral character of this man *has* already *been* sufficiently *explained.*

Again from the essay on Lord Clive:

An army of forty thousand men *was* speedily *assembled* round him.

From the essay on Frederick the Great:

It *might* not unreasonably *be expected,* etc.

The Saxon camp at Pirna *was* in the meantime closely *invested.*

But we *should* very imperfectly *describe* the state of Frederick's mind, etc.

Here citations must stop, or we should have to quote a large part of English literature. In a word, there is absolutely no literary warrant for putting adverbs and limiting expressions in purgatory, in order to keep every auxiliary of a verb-phrase solid with its principal verb for the benefit of those who are supposed not to have the wit to put the parts together if they are once separated. The English language luxuriates in confidence in the common sense of those who inherit it, and so gives them ample measure of wholesome freedom.

The auxiliaries *shall* and *will* do offer certain difficulties which no one believes that any one else has perfectly mastered. We are reminded of Bunyan's description:

"Yea, and to my knowledge, said he, here have been swallowed up at least twenty thousand cartloads, yea millions of wholesome instructions, that have at all seasons been brought from all places of the King's dominions; (and they that can tell say, that they are the best materials to make good ground of the place, if so be it might be mended)."

Yet there is a charm in the midst of the perplexities. For English has performed the unique feat of dividing the future longitudinally along parallel lines, so that *shall* is as much future as *will,* and *will* as much future as *shall,* but a different future. For example:

"Truth, crushed to earth, *shall* rise again."

How weak and flat that would become, if we were to make it "*will* rise again," because we should have lost the future of resolve or destiny, and acquired only that of extended time. *Shall,* from the Anglo-Saxon *sceal,* the present indicative of *sculan,* to owe (hence to be under obligation or necessity), has a force and implication that *will* never attains. On the other hand, *will,* from the Anglo-Saxon *willan,* signifies to have purpose or intention, and may at times, by emphasis, denote the most strenuous resolution. In ordinary use, as making up the future tense, these original meanings are shaded off so as to be less sharply distinctive. In this way are formed two schemes of the future tense, one *declarative,* denoting simple anticipated fact; the other *purposive,* denoting volition, either as exercised by the speaker for himself or as enforced upon the one spoken to or spoken of. Thus:

| (*Declarative*) | | (*Purposive*) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I *shall* | | I *will* | |
| he *will* | | he *shall* | |
| we *shall* | go | we *will* | go |
| you *will* | | you *shall* | |
| they *will* | | they *shall* | |

Thus *shall* and *will* change with the persons in a way that is to learners somewhat perplexing, but is easily mastered by a little study and care.

But having learned this broad distinction, many at once fall into error by supposing this rule of thumb to cover all cases of the use of *shall* and *will*. Thus the author of a work for the most part able and scholarly complicates the whole question of these auxiliaries into one of dark perplexity by making this rule exclusive, and then censuring all other use as erroneous, no matter how numerous or eminent the authorities for the varying use. For example, he writes:

"*Shall* is a word of authority and command. . . . *Shall* is properly used only by the power that can enforce it.

"But what is 'I *shall?*' Remembering that *shall* expresses compulsion emanating from the speaker, if the natural sense of the words be regarded, they mean, 'I will compel myself.' But it is only the unwilling who need compulsion; and if unwilling, whence comes the motive-power to compel? The expression, like several others, is an absurdity."

*Shall* is properly used only by one in authority, but in the Bible it is in the mouths of all alike. Again, one having authority does not command or threaten anything at variance with his own character and sentiments.

"For many *shall* come in my name, saying I am Christ, and shall deceive many. . . . Nation *shall* rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. . . . Then *shall* they deliver you up to be afflicted and *shall* kill you. . . . And many false prophets *shall* arise and *shall* deceive many.

"It would be inconsistent with all ideas ever entertained of Jesus to think these calamities and wrongs ordered, intended, or desired by him. . . . Evidently *shall* was merely an expression of futurity."

The simple fact is, as this author's own examples should have shown him, that *shall* is often and elegantly used to express something more and other than command or compulsion,—what is *destined* or *sure* to happen, a certain future result or event without reference

to any one's authority or volition. "I *shall* be at the office to-morrow (in the ordinary course of events)." David says of his lost child:

"I *shall* go to him but he *shall* not return to me."
—2 *Sam.* xii, 23.

The prophetess says to the unwilling warrior:

"I *will* surely go with thee; notwithstanding the journey that thou takest *shall* not be for thine honor; for the Lord *shall* sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."—*Judges* iv, 8-9.

Not that she could compel or coerce the Almighty, but she had a vision of the destined *sure* event. Thus English speech and literature are full of instances of the delicate and effective use of *shall* where no thought of personal command or compulsion can be suggested. So the distinction between *shall* and *will* passes far beyond a technical rule of grammar, and becomes a matter of style. He who insists on a narrow iron rule or a metaphysical explanation will miss this nicety of language forever, while it will become delightfully clear and satisfying to him who will simply steep himself in the best English usage, written or spoken, till he comes not to wrangle or dogmatize about it, but to feel it.

PREPOSITIONS and CONJUNCTIONS have been treated in the chapter on connectives, the links of style.

INTERJECTIONS constitute a kind of formless emotional language which may be appended almost anywhere to the formal and analytical style. These words are commonly said to have no grammatical connection with the rest of the sentence in which they appear. Yet the interjection often gives a fulness to expression of thought and feeling that could not otherwise be secured. Thus, "*Oh* that Israel had hearkened to my voice and my peo-

ple had walked in my ways." Here the "Oh" completes the sentence with a touch of feeling, as it were breathing a soul into the statement which would be dry and formal without it.

English syntax is determined by the lack of inflection in the language. An inflected language, as the Latin, could put a noun or pronoun almost anywhere in the sentence, because the form of the word would show whether it was subject or object of the verb. Thus, the Latin word *Roma* is nominative in form, and can never be the object of a verb. If it is to be an object, its form must be changed to *Romam* (the Latin accusative, corresponding to the English objective case). That form, *Romam*, may be placed anywhere in a sentence, and will still show its case by its form. In like manner the noun *Carthago* must be a nominative, and can not under any circumstances be the object of a verb. If it is to be made the object, its form must be changed to the accusative *Carthaginem*. The English sentence "Rome destroyed Carthage," may be translated verbatim into Latin as: *"Roma delevit Carthaginem,"* but, because *Roma* shows by its form that it is a nominative, while Carthaginem shows by its form that it is an objective, the order of the words may be changed in any possible way without affecting the meaning. We may have:

*Roma* delevit *Carthaginem;*
Delevit *Carthaginem Roma;*
Delevit *Roma Carthaginem;*
*Carthaginem* delevit *Roma;*
*Carthaginem Roma* delevit;
*Roma Carthaginem* delevit.

In either arrangement the meaning of the sentence is not affected in the slightest degree. In any one of these six forms the sentence means that Rome was the de-

stroyer, and Carthage the destroyed. Now try a similar inversion in English:

Rome destroyed Carthage;
Carthage destroyed Rome:

and we have a flat contradiction, unless we mean that each destroyed the other. "Carthage destroyed Rome" would contradict the truth of history. If we say, "Carthage Rome destroyed," or "Rome Carthage destroyed," we cannot decide from either of those sentences which was the destroyer, and which the destroyed. We have lost the advantage of position of the nominative and objective, which alone could make the meaning sure in English.

As the English personal pronouns and the pronoun *who* have distinct forms in the objective case, their objectives are not necessarily limited to the place after the verb, but may take any position in the sentence; as, "Me he restored to mine office;"—"Them will I bring to my holy mountain;"—"Whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down." Yet the tendency to place the object after the verb is so strong in English that objective pronouns are as a rule ordinarily so placed; as "The work pleases me;"— "His mother loves him."

### Grammar Broadens the Base of Culture

An adequate knowledge of grammar tends to the democratization of culture. You tell us that one who has been brought up in cultured society, and in favorable surroundings, will speak English correctly with no special knowledge or thought of grammar. This is a limited truth, which is often flung out as the challenge of a caste or clique, as if one should say, Is not that enough? What more would you ask? In such view

you offer us the aristocracy of culture. Would you hear correct English? Associate only with the cultured and favored few. Would you use correct English? Be one of that charmed circle. For the rest of mankind, they exist that you may have the privilege of smiling at their uncouthness.

But is the superior smile of a cultured group, even if that group includes yourself, an adequate reason for the existence of multitudes of human beings? Why not extend the circle of correctness to include the whole host of humanity, and bring all into a true "republic of letters?"

The things that make cultured and elegant speech can be stated in clear words. These statements can be arranged in consistent relation to each other so as to form a grammatical system, which can be learned by any intelligent person, so that all educated people may share in excellence of language, and each one be, not a member of a little self-satisfied clique, but a citizen of a vast realm where all share in the inspiration, the power, and the freedom of a truly cultured speech. That is a desirable object of education, worthy of study and toil to teach and win.

Such systematized grammatical study tends to the unity of the language:

1. In space. A widely extended language tends to break up into dialect by mere extent and diffusion. Communities separated by mountain ranges, by rivers, or even by oceans, the members of which rarely, if ever, meet each other in personal converse, insensibly develop different forms and meanings of words, and different methods of connecting words and ideas in continuous speech, or, as we say, differences of idiom. Thus dialects springing from a common stock may drift so

widely apart that those using one cannot understand the other. To prevent this the dictionary must hold the words to a common form and meaning, and the grammar must hold the methods of connecting words to a common model. Especially in the "far-flung" English speech, which is constantly enrolling recruits from every race and nation, there is not merely disintegration, but absolute conflict and wrenching, as each new learner seeks to distort this strange English to suit his preconceived ideas of what a language should be. Here a system of grammar, established and honored, and the same on every soil or shore, has useful and commanding place.

2. In time. Every language, like every living organism, is undergoing a constant process of change, so long as it is alive. The perspectives of years, generations, and centuries vary. The vicissitudes of prosperity and adversity, of war and peace, the advance or decline of agriculture, manufactures, and various arts, the freedom or restriction of travel, insensibly cause adoption of new words, the dropping of some once in favor, and the extension or restriction of meaning of those still favored. It is only in the dead languages that rules and meanings are absolute and changeless. The English language, at the forefront of every great movement of the world's progress, must have rational privilege of variation with movement of time and events. A true system of English grammar, historic in basis, rational in construction, yet free and elastic as the movements of life demand, will enable the language to change and develop by the advancing activity of life, but not by retrogression, decline, and decay, keeping ever through the advancing present a grand unity with the best of all its mighty and glorious past.

## CHAPTER IX

## THE ENLARGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE VOCABULARY

The vocabulary of any person is the number of words which that person habitually uses; or, in a wider sense, the number of words that he readily understands when he hears or reads them. As regards expression, the first sense only is of importance, namely: the number of words that one habitually or readily uses. Persons are numerous who recognize a twenty-dollar gold-piece or bank-note, when they see it; but they very seldom see either, and for all practical purposes of life they are as if those denominations of money did not exist. We are rich only by the money in our actual possession or ready for us on call. Similarly, our vocabulary is the aggregate of words we have in actual possession, so that we can produce them on demand. A former American consul at Rome remarked on one occasion, "Though I have been resident at Rome for twenty years, and can understand anything that an Italian gentleman or lady may say, I can not yet understand the talk of the common people on the street. Yet these people all understand what a gentleman or lady may say to them in pure Italian." That is, the common people recognize the better speech when it comes before them, but for all the ordinary purposes of life, the pure Italian does not exist for them.

This is, to a considerable degree, the case with the average American schoolboy and schoolgirl, and with

the slightly educated classes of the community, though much modified by our general system of public instruction. The children and the crowd understand the scholarly style when they hear or read it, but they regard it as a kind of dress-parade speech, which they would never think of using in common life; and they would soon find themselves confused, if they should try to speak it. There is an anecdote in a recent paper of a mother who was much annoyed by her boy's way of talking to his dog. "Tom," she said, "why will you constantly say to Jeff, 'Set up,' when you know perfectly well you ought to say 'sit up'?" "Oh, well, mother," Tom cheerfully replied, "of course I have lots of grammar, but I don't want to waste it on him, when he's only a dog."

But the great object of the study of language is, to gain command of a pure, noble, and elegant type of speech, which shall come readily to tongue or pen, and which shall not be too good for daily use. At the same time one who aspires to literary composition or public speaking should be able to rise still above what is good and admirable for ordinary use, and to employ a choicer style of especial dignity, according to the demands of the subject and the occasion.

The important consideration is, what range of words each one of us has available as the means of expression of our own thought. If we go back to the etymology of the word "vocabulary," which is from *voco,* call, we may say that the vocabulary of every person is the number of words he has ready on call.

The English language contains upward of 400,000 words, for more than that number have been actually listed in the Standard Dictionary. But the words actually used by any one person are the merest fraction of

this vast store. Dr. George P. Marsh, writing in 1850, and estimating the number of English words then in actual use at 100,000, says:

"Now there are persons who know this vocabulary in nearly its whole extent, but they understand a large proportion of it, very much as they are acquainted with Greek or Latin, that is, as the dialect of books or of special arts or professions, and not as a living speech, the common language of daily and hourly thought. Or if, like some celebrated English and American orators, living and dead, they are able upon occasion to bring into the field in the war of words even the half of this vast array of light and heavy troops, yet they habitually content themselves with a much less imposing array of verbal force, and use for ordinary purpose but a very small proportion of the words they have at their command. Out of our immense magazine of words and their combinations, every man selects his own implements and weapons. . . .

"Few writers or speakers use as many as 10,000 words, ordinary persons of fair intelligence not above three or four thousand. If a scholar were required to name, without examination the authors whose English vocabulary was the largest, he would probably specify the all-embracing Shakespeare and the all-knowing Milton. And yet, in all the works of the great dramatist there occur not more than 15,000 words, in the poems of Milton not above 8,000. . . .

"To those whose attention has not been turned to the subject, these are surprising facts, but if we run over a few pages of a dictionary and observe how great a proportion of the words are such as we do not ourselves individually use, we shall be forced to conclude that we each find a very limited vocabulary sufficient for our own purposes."

Even a small vest-pocket dictionary contains some 25,000 words. From the number of English words actually used, listed, and defined we see how wide is the range of possible choice. Probably there is not one of us who could not greatly improve our power of expression by increasing the number of well-chosen words

ready for use at our pleasure. Many persons would be astonished, if their conversation could be reproduced by dictaphone, to find how often they repeat some few words, or even some single word. They would find the same characteristic in their own hastily written letters. That is, they are unconsciously restricting themselves to an exceedingly limited vocabulary, when a wider range of words would be, not only more elegant, but also more interesting and expressive. An extreme instance of such limitation may be seen in the following copy of a letter taken from an old English publication:

"I *got* on horseback within ten minutes after I *got* your letter. When I *got* to Canterbury, I *got* a chaise for town, but I *got* wet through before I *got* to Canterbury, and I have *got* such a cold as I shall not be able to *get* rid of in a hurry. I *got* to the Treasury about noon, but, first of all, I *got* shaved and dressed. I soon *got* into the secret of *getting* a memorial before the Board, but I could not *get* an answer then. However, I *got* intelligence from the messenger that I should most likely *get* an answer the next morning. As soon as I *got* back to my inn, I *got* to bed. It was not long before I *got* to sleep. When I *got* up in the morning, I *got* myself dressed, and *got* my breakfast, that I might *get* out in time to *get* an answer to my memorial. As soon as I *got* it, I *got* into the chaise and *got* to Canterbury by three, and about tea-time I *got* home. I have *got* nothing more to say."

Here the unfortunate word "get" occurs in some form twenty-eight times. The use of nineteen new words is urgently called for, besides the varying of phrase at other points. By these slight changes the letter may be made very presentable. Thus:

"I *mounted* on horseback within ten minutes after I *received* your letter. When I *reached* Canterbury, I *procured* a chaise for town, but I had *become* wet through before I *arrived at* Canterbury, and I have *taken* such a cold as I shall not be able to *recover from* in a hurry. I *went* to the

Treasury about noon, but first of all I *took care to be* shaved and dressed. I soon *learned* the secret of *bringing* a memorial before the Board, but I could not *secure* an answer then. However, I *obtained* intelligence from the messenger that I should most likely *receive* an answer the next morning. As soon as I *returned* to my inn, I *had* my supper, and *went* to bed. It was not long before I *fell* asleep. When I *arose* in the morning, I *dressed* and *ate* my breakfast, that I might *go* out in time to *obtain* an answer to my memorial. As soon as I *received* it, I *got* into the chaise, and *arrived* at Canterbury by three, and about tea-time I *reached* home. I *have* nothing more to say."

It is to be noticed that none of the words thus supplied are out of the ordinary. All are such as any intelligent person should be able to use without a second thought. The illustration shows, however, that a speaker or writer needs to have at command a very considerable number of good words, in order to express himself well, even in a brief communication.

But mere number of words is not enough; they must be excellent, appropriate, felicitous words. Every one has heard persons who, in public address and in conversation, had an inexhaustible supply of words with a readily exhaustible supply of thought, making us recall Hamlet, who, in his answer to an intrusive question:

"What do you read, my lord?"

replied,

"Words, words, words;"

or the glib talker caricatured in "The Merchant of Venice": "Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing; more than any man in all Venice." An abundant, but ill-chosen and ill-assorted vocabulary gives one the impression you gain in going through some bargain-stores, where the articles are numerous enough and cheap in price, but also cheap in quality, and you feel that you

are letting down the standards of life by even spending your time among them. Hence, in seeking to increase the store of words at our command, we should take pains also to improve our stock by adding only such as are among the real treasures of speech, just as we would avoid seeking a false appearance of wealth by wearing paste diamonds and filling our purses with counterfeit money. The enlargement and improvement may even at times consist in dropping some less desirable words quite out of use, or in using much more seldom than heretofore certain words excellent in themselves, but that have been indiscriminately employed for meanings that other words may more fitly express. On this subject, Edwin L. Shuman in his "Practical Journalism" (p. 171) very admirably remarks:

"The right use of words should be a matter of life-long study. No man can ever learn all there is to know about the magnificent instrument of expression called the English language, but any student can in time acquire a pure and beautiful diction.

"The best guide to such a style is a sensitive literary conscience, acquired by reading only the best authors and absorbing their vocabulary. This should be supplemented with a habitual study of the root-meanings of words.

"The errors that most do flourish in the reporters' room of the modern newspaper consist in the slight misuse of words—not marked enough to attain the charm of Mrs. Partington's literary style, yet not correct enough to be good English. . . . I have little sympathy with the purists, who would reduce the English to a dead language by forbidding all change or growth. . . . But the fact remains that a habitual carelessness in the choice of words ruins the writer's style, and ultimately extinguishes his hope of advancement."

The work necessary for the enlargement and improvement of the vocabulary may be divided into three branches,—reading, hearing, and doing.

## I. Reading

The first requirement for an adequate vocabulary is general reading. This reading for command of words is different from reading for mastery of any particular subject. In the latter case you will read a great number of books of the same kind, as law books, medical books, or the like. But to gain an extensive supply of valuable words, you want to make your reading as wide and as various as possible, with the single proviso that it shall be in really good English. It must be excellent of its kind,—worth being influenced by, and worth remembering.

1. *Read books* in distinction from periodicals and newspapers. We do an uncomputed amount of fugitive reading, absolutely without value, and almost without motive. The news of the day we must note. Current opinion, as shown in able reviews, we wish to follow. A light, breezy story may sometimes rest by unbending the mind. Some of our magazine stories and articles are beautiful as well as entertaining, and have the advantage of giving the best current speech of our own very day. The dialect stories so much in vogue for a while, and still appearing at times, are from a literary point of view, simple abominations. Inaccuracy and imperfection are easy enough to find. We do not need that any one should exploit them for us in print. We would not join in the old stereotyped criticism of "newspaper English." However it may once have been, the better class of newspapers of the present day have attained a very admirable style,—for its purpose, the statement of facts and the expression of opinion on the passing events and current topics of the day. Their editors are able men, often highly educated, always well educated for

their special work. From the driving haste with which their issues are sent forth, errors will slip in, at which we enjoy many a chuckle. But if the most careful and profound scholar were to attempt to get out one issue within their limited time, he would give them ampler opportunity to laugh at him. Moreover, he would often improve the staid drowsiness of his own style, if he could catch the life, movement, stir, crispness, and vigor which a good editor or reviewer puts into his best articles. The weakness of the newspaper style is that it is fugitive, momentary, and compelled to be "popular." An editor who should "write for immortality," or for posterity, would not be an editor long. Nevertheless a higher and more enduring style is required for the best purposes of literature and oratory.

Vocabulary-building should go beyond commonplace words and momentary interests. We need the materials supplied by the world of books. Then, we must get over the illusion that "a book is a book." How many of the "best sellers" of last year will be remembered next year, even by their names? Some books, it is true, are worth reading, even while the authors are alive. There are a few such in almost every generation. It would have been a mistake not to read the "Waverley Novels" or "Vanity Fair" or "David Copperfield" or "The Scarlet Letter" when those works came fresh from the press. They were as good then as they are to-day. But, with the multitude of books now constantly appearing, one who would read for intellect and style can seldom afford to read a new book "to see if it is good." It is a favorite diversion in some parts of the western United States to beguile an unsuspecting stranger into eating a root known as the "Indian turnip," which has the peculiar quality that it may be eaten in considerable quantity

before any bad taste is perceived. Then the guileless experimenter is as eager as Lady Macbeth for unavailable floods of water to wash away the intolerable flavor. There are some books of sudden popularity that a good mind may reject at once on Dr. Johnson's principle. When he was challenged for condemning a book which he had not read, the sturdy old scholar replied, "Sir, I do not need to eat a whole joint of meat to find out whether it is tainted. The first mouthful is enough." There are others of which the severest censure is, that their reading is a woful waste of time. When we consider that no human being can hope in one lifetime to read all the first-class books of the world, little time should be spent on the second-class even, while trash should have no place. The stream will not rise above its source, and our style will not be superior to that of our models. The average person will do best to take the opinion of good judges, and to pass by any book not so recommended. On the other hand, a book that has lived fifty years is sure to be above the ordinary standard; otherwise it would not have lived. Such books bring one among the master-spirits of human thought, whose language is sure to partake of their own greatness.

When the Hungarian patriot, Kossuth, came to America in the middle of the last century, our people were surprised at his excellent and beautiful English. The explanation was that he had learned English from books, and brought back to us what was best in our own literature, turned into living speech. Something like this was the experience of Mrs. Browning. For years an invalid, shut out from the active world, she read the best of our older literature, and gained a singularly rich and elegant style. She was by some critics censured for affectation because she would use from time

to time an archaic or even an obsolete word. But this was innocently done. These were the words of the books she read; and she did not mingle with the world enough to know that the world had left them behind. These, however, are but occasional blemishes upon otherwise beautiful work, fresh still because it draws from the accumulated stores of the past. Its excellence is shown by the fact that her poems have lived. It is probable that a speaker or writer who should carefully form himself upon the old masters, with reasonable consideration of the present, would be looked upon as having a new style.

2. *Read books,* rather than about books. Many think they know an author because they have read an article about him in an encyclopedia. By that process they know the author just as much as they would have known the man if they had stood beside his burial casket. Not much is added by picking up some few of his sentences in a volume of "Familiar Quotations." To know him, you must read some mass of his writings:—see how he leads up to his subject; how he struggles through or around its difficulties; how he reaches his strong conclusions; note his faults and his prejudices, his strength and his weakness, all that is human in him; breathe the atmosphere of his day, as it insensibly pervades his work. Then he and his style are real to you forevermore.

3. *Read in quantities:*—just as much as you have time for, and can master at one stretch. By such reading your mind becomes charged with an author's style as by no other means. You get a something that will not come by picking out words or reading selections. Memory of language is by association. If you have but one line of association for a word, that word will be

difficult to recall, and will not fit in naturally with familiar words, which have a thousand associations. In your conversational style that word will sound stiff and artificial, or, as we say, "pedantic," and in your written or printed style it will stand out from the context, as if written or printed in red ink. Here is a person, for instance, to whom the word *reciprocal* is not familiar. He encounters it once in some book. He thinks it a nice word. He resolves to use it at the first opportunity. But when he tries, he finds it a little hard to remember. When it does come to mind he makes a grab at it, lest it get away. Then he is not quite sure how to fit his other words to it, and, like the new cloth in the old garment, "the piece that is put in agreeth not with the old." But suppose he finds that word repeatedly in his reading, and used in different connections. He also comes upon *reciprocate* and *reciprocity*. Many associations with that word are developed. It no longer seems strange and foreign. He has come to think it. Then it joins insensibly with the other contents of his thought, and when he comes to use it, it will be easy, natural,—and almost certainly appropriate. It will make natural connections with the rest of his speech, because it has made natural connections in his thought.

By reading in quantities you come upon words of the better class over and over again, and in ever new connections. Thus you invoke the instinctive subconscious activities of the mind, which will often do more than direct intent. If a plant needs development, you can do but little by pouring water over its leaves; you can not inject water or carbon into them. Your best way is to supply water at the roots, place the plant so that the due amount of sunlight shall fall upon it, and wait for the untraceable microscopic activities of the entire or-

ganism to renew all its tissues to vigorous life. It is the water absorbed by the root that will helpfully reach the leaf. In like manner, you need to absorb an author's style, so that, after earnest and continuous reading, you will find yourself involuntarily constructing phrases or sentences after that author's pattern; you will be reaching out for his words as means of expression in your own new thinking. Then, if you suddenly come upon an extract from his writings without his name, you will say, "That reads like Emerson;—like Carlyle;—like Macaulay;—like Addison;" as the case may be. Then you have come really to know that author. His style has taken actual hold upon your mind,—has become part of the content of your thought. By that time you have probably had enough of that author for the immediate present, for you must not become his slave nor his imitator. Take up then some different author, and repeat the process.

4. *Read rapidly,* to secure such absorption. We would not advise you, as the orthodox treatises do, to "read with pencil in hand," and make notes every few minutes. That method, if it could be enforced, would exterminate the reading of sensational novels. Read freely, just as if you were listening to an interesting speaker, whom you could not interrupt in every other sentence, to say, "What was that word or phrase? Wait a moment, while I note it down." Make your book a companion, and let it talk to you. Then, at some natural break in your reading, try to recall what is best worth remembering, turning back over the book, if necessary, to fix important items. Make notes then, if you like; but try to remember as much as possible without the notes. If the book is your own, mark freely by a perpendicular stroke along the margin any passage that

especially interests you. Then you can easily pick out those passages in rereading. Sometimes write in a few salient words in the margin the instant impression you gain of the author's words or thought, favorable or unfavorable. You will find those among the most valuable notes you will ever make, even if you have to correct them on revision, because they will be alive, full of the fresh thought of that moment, which—with the same intensity and complexion—will not return. But read, and read eagerly on.

When possible, read a whole book or a whole section "at a sitting." It does not take so long to read a whole play of Shakespeare as to go to the theater to hear it; for you save at least the time of going and coming. So the play becomes more than if read piecemeal. Hamlet's talk with the grave-diggers means something when you are full of interest in the character of Hamlet, and have suddenly contrasted with his thoughts the ideas of the common laborers. The very best way to read any poem of moderate length is to read it from start to finish without a break, and let its entire impact come upon the mind like a minstrel's song. In the case of a longer poem, read one division in that way; as, for instance, one book of "Paradise Lost." Then, after some interval, read that same poem or portion again critically, line by line, studying the finest passages word by word. See where the power dwells, and—if you can—how the magic is wrought. Many persons would find the English Bible made wholly new by reading it,—as it was written,—in large sections, regardless of chapters, as Franklin is said to have copied out the book of Ruth and read it as an Oriental tale in the pre-revolutionary days in Paris, to a club of infidel philosophers and literary men, who greatly admired his discovery. It is the saturating of

the mind with a book that makes its style your own possession.

Only one form of interruption in such reading is to be recommended. You come to some exceptionally beautiful or noble passage in poem, oration, essay, or history; —pause and learn those lines or that sentence by heart. That will be easy, because their impression is then fresh and strong upon you. That will not check the eagerness of your reading. You will be nearer to your author by having made something of his your very own, and you will hurry on with tense interest to find new gems along the same inviting path. The portions thus learned will come back to you at many unexpected times, as a mental delight, or as a help in expressing or emphasizing your own thought as you speak or write. You are richer for those stored-up treasures.

By such abundant and continuous reading you will develop the instinct of language. In this capacity as a natural endowment persons greatly differ, but in all it is capable of indefinite increase. One who possesses the greatest natural facility has still to seek perfection, if only in the restraining and pruning of his own exuberance. Another, of the strongly executive type, who finds it easier to do the hardest thing than to say the easiest, needs, nevertheless, to be capable of something more than a grunt of agreement or a growl of dissent. The mind of either type needs to cultivate a vocabulary suited to the possessor's life-purpose. For this either will profit by abundant reading.

4. *Read by snatches.* Every truth has a converse that is equally true. When life's demands do not permit us to do all that is desirable, we may checkmate necessity by doing what we can. There are odd half-hours that, if utilized, will accumulate, like the compound

interest of a savings-bank into a surprising total. Keep some first-class book at hand—literally, "at hand"—where it can be picked up and read in odd minutes of waiting or resting. Much of our best literature is exactly adapted to be so read, as the shorter poems of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Moore, Hood, Bryant, or Whittier. Any one of Bacon's "Essays" may be so read. You would know Addison? His papers in the "Spectator" were especially designed "to be read at all breakfast-tables." Keep a volume of the "Spectator" within easy reach, and in any available half-hour read any paper in the volume signed by one letter of the name CLIO. Those are Addison's. So day by day you will come into touch with the thought and style of one of the great masters of English literature. Many books which look quite formidable are easily read a chapter at a time.

5. *Read what you like.* There was a time when easy and happy learning was suspected of shallowness. The ideal of education was discipline, and if learning came too easily, something must be done to make it grind. If the student was in danger of thoroughly enjoying Cicero, he must be put upon a course of Zumpt's grammar, which would have been too much for Cicero himself. It is pitiful to see how the triumphant eagerness with which the little ones rush along the early grades, happy in being wiser every day, often changes to weariness and dread as they reach the grammar and high schools. It has been, even in recent years, a custom, perhaps not yet wholly extinct in certain schools, to require the pupil to put in a stipulated amount of "home work,"—often two hours upon a certain lesson, and to report the same next day. One business man of the author's acquaintance received from a principal a letter asking,

"How much time did your daughter spend yesterday on (certain specified) lessons." To which he replied: "If my daughter knows her lessons, there is no further inquiry to be made. If she does not, report to me, and I will see that she learns them. She is not to be worried about any stipulated time of study."

It is fairly amusing to note in biographies of literary men how often the statement is made in some form that "at the university he did not greatly distinguish himself in studies,"—or "he was considered remiss in study,"—but "he did a great amount of desultory reading." This "desultory reading" proved to be the best thing for him, as his intellectual instinct led him off the beaten track. This is no plea for idleness, negligence and intellectual vagrancy. There have been great men who were good scholars, even according to the university standard. But we would have the books the playthings or tools of the student,—he always more than they. We would give scope to the natural bent of the individual mind, as a divine revelation of what that individual was created to do. We would maintain that true scholarship is compatible with freedom and delight in reading the books that impart it. Thus Mrs. Browning tells of her early unguided studies:

> (I) read my books
> Without considering whether they were fit
> To do me good. Mark there. We get no good
> By being ungenerous, even to a book,
> And calculating profits . . . so much help
> By so much reading. It is rather when
> We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge
> Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's profound,
> Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—
> 'Tis then we get the right good from a book.*

* "Aurora Leigh," Bk. 1, St. 36.

6. *Read what you do not like.* Again a converse proposition as true as its opposite. By following one's likings limitlessly there is danger of developing mental one-sidedness, like the bodily deformity of one who carries some weight always in the right or always in the left hand. No good thing in this world is ever accomplished by doing only what one likes to do. By reading only on that principle, one is in danger of developing overmuch some mental traits already too strong. The mind should have room for freedom and delight, but it must learn also to act by mere resolve and determination. A well-disciplined mind can do some work,—at times some of its best work—under compulsion. When that is done, the freedom will be all the more free, and the delight more delightful. No man is good for anything who can not say on occasion, "This must be done; it can be, and it shall be, and I am the one to do it,—liking or not liking,—right now."

At times the best reason for taking up some line of study or reading is that one does not like it. That shows a mental deficiency which it is important to correct. Here is a student who loves argument and soaring raptures of imagination, but hates mathematics, because that seems to him but dry bones of cabalistic signs and profitless enigmas. He forces himself to master it in order to hold a respectable place in college; and suddenly he finds that he can handle argument as never before, because he knows now what Lincoln studied geometry in order to learn, "what is meant by demonstration." At the same time he is less in danger of wild flights of fancy and of mixed metaphor, because he has learned the mighty laws of equality and proportion, and that, through all theories and rhapsodies, fixed

facts and universal laws will come back with their resistless demands.

Here is another who "does not like poetry." He is probably one of the many who have never learned how to read poetry. The man of the literal and pragmatic type of mind takes up Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," and says, "Oh, come now! All that never could have happened. The shooting of that bird could not possibly have had any effect on the direction of the winds, which are determined by meteorological laws, and can be mapped out in advance. This thing is contrary to the known facts."

But he is overlooking one known fact, viz.: that persons of admirable intellect have found power in that poem. Power of some kind must be there, and it would be a rational scientific process to inquire what that power is. It is even possible that there may be a deficiency in the objector's own mind which it would be highly desirable to supply. Suppose he should be able to open up some hitherto closed tracts of mental activity. Let him say, "People of good minds have enjoyed this, and I am going to learn what they have found there." Get the poet's view of the wide, marvelous, mysterious sea, where unimagined wonders meet the voyager by day and night. Easiest of all explanations to primitive man was that of magic. So sailors in ancient days were always superstitious. There were mermen and mermaids, griffins and dragons and giants in the sea or on its shores; there were sirens that lured to dangerous rocks; there was Calypso's enchanted isle and the lotus-eater's dreamy land; it was not rocks that threatened off the coast of Italy, but Scylla and Charybdis roaring from their ocean caves. The sea was much more interesting then. We will be for the moment companions of

those "ancient mariners." We will let ourselves go, under the poet's spell, and, as the children say, "make believe" that it is all true. Then we can be thrilled by the wonderful story, and admire its exquisite diction. So the poet transports us out of ourselves, and our mental world is wider in range and richer by the new images with which he has peopled it. The first condition for reading poetry is to give ourselves up to its illusion. Then we can feel its charm. Poetry is one of the best forms of reading, even in preparation for speaking or writing prose. For poetry awakens the imaginative power of the mind, the want of which makes much substantial prose and much well-intended public speaking so deadly dry and barren.

As regards the vocabulary, it is to be remembered that any true poet is a master of words. He must be. The demands of meter or rime, or both, compel him to reject many a word that would be adequate in prose. He must find by careful search some word that will express his meaning and still fit his verse, or else he must reconstruct the verse. Hence he lives in an atmosphere of word-study, and as you read his lines you will find yourself amid choice words, selected for the most part with fine taste and wise discrimination.

Another reader finds history dreary, as he has studied it in school. But every one likes a story. Suppose we read to find the "stories" that are in history. There we have a supply that can never run out, stranger, grander, and often more beautiful than fiction. Instead of some one's imagination of what an imaginary character might have done in imaginary situations, we have what was actually done in the living world by people as real as ourselves, and they the chiefs of the nations and the ages; for only the deeds of such have come down

through time,—except as some inferior characters gain a factitious immortality by association with the great.

Read history by connected interest—of period with period, of nation with nation, or of the historic story with any topic in which for the moment you are interested. If, for instance, you are engaged upon Elizabethan literature, read Froude's account of the victory of the little English fleet over the dread Spanish Armada;—a victory which energized the English nation as Marathon and Salamis vivified and exalted the Greeks. In thus reading for the story you do not need greatly to worry about dates and statistics. It is well to pick up what one can in passing. It is easy to remember, for instance, that Charles V was born in 1500, so that each year of his life corresponds to a year of the same number in the century; hence, when he presided in 1521 at the Diet of Worms, the young emperor was just twenty-one years old. Again, one may easily remember that Ferdinand and Isabella took the Moorish capital of Granada in 1492, the very year in which Columbus discovered America.

This method of reading, you will perceive, is wholly different from reading for mastery of historical facts, when it may be necessary to toil through some fearfully dry books. But many of the great historians, as Gibbon, Hume, Macaulay, Motley, Prescott, Carlyle, Froude, and numerous others, have been masters of a noble English style. In reading for the style you gather a great store of facts and incidents, which are admirable illustrative material, while you are at the same time absorbing the vocabulary and modes of expression of these great masters. This may be very heterodox from the professorial point of view, but it is practicable, entertaining, delightful.

7. *Diversify your reading.* By no means confine yourself to one subject,—still less to one author. There is a great snare in the "sets" of single authors, elegantly printed and bound, and even if moderate in price, yet costing enough to keep an ordinary purchaser from buying many other books. It is not desirable to read and reread all of Scott, or all of Dickens, admirable as many of their works are. One who does this becomes a slave of one author, and is sure to become also an imitator, with the result that befalls all imitators, of copying defects and falling short of excellencies. In reading for command of words, choose authors of the most different and divergent styles. Not only do not limit yourself to one author, but not to one period or one school of literary art. Vary the Victorian period with the Elizabethan, fiction with history, solid prose with dashes into poetry for refreshment and inspiration, the lofty, Latinized style of Johnson with the simple, easy, rippling sentences of Addison, the fervor of Byron with the contemplative quiet of Wordsworth, etc. Thus you will gain an all-round literary development, that will give you a store of varied words suited to all the changing demands of literary expression, and of common speech.

The study of language we may here treat incidentally under the general head of Reading. Important as word-study is in itself, it is of limited utility in the formation of a good working vocabulary. Very little for this purpose is gained by distillation and dissection of words. If any one wishes a dry, heavy, dreary, wooden, and lumbering style, let him read the books of experts on etymology. The reason is that their view of language has become a view of the ultimate components of language. They have lost range and perspective. Their

linguistic study is like landscape-gardening with a microscope. Words have ceased to be alive for them, and are no more fit to be introduced to an audience than an articulated skeleton from an anatomical museum. It is the word as read or heard, in some connection with other words, and in vital touch with human thoughts and human interests, that is valuable to the orator or the author when he would address his fellow men.

The study of at least one foreign language will help the student to mastery of his own, because in translating he is constantly compelled to select English words to match the foreign equivalent, and often the choice requires much study and care. For similar reasons a good book of differentiated synonyms is of advantage, because the words it discusses are exhibited in action in connection with other words, and the student is compelled to make each time an independent choice for the particular occasion and context in which he would use any single word. Etymology has a very practical value. It is pitiable that many persons never learn to distinguish between *principal* and *principle*, never see any reason why they should not write *seperate* for *separate*, and even confuse words so unlike as *quite* and *quiet*. Etymology and word-study are of exceeding use in preventing such lapses, and are to be recommended if restricted to a limited amount of the student's time, not encroaching upon more important study. It must never be forgotten that the word as used in connection with other words for expression of thought is our prime concern in the acquirement of a vocabulary. The dictionary does not tend to repress constructive thought, because it is used for words in action and expressly to determine their meaning in connection with other words. You hear or read a word you do not know, look it up in the

dictionary, and go readily on. Instead of being burdened with a task, you are freed from an impediment.

## II. Hearing

The most direct of all ways of learning language is by the ear. So the children of all races learn their mother-tongue. They have virtually learned a language before they are able to read or write. In families where correct and excellent English is habitually spoken, the children commonly grow up with a good command of language. Let us utilize intelligently and with set purpose this great power for the enlargement and improvement of our vocabulary. Opportunity for such utilization presents itself under two chief forms:

1. *Conversation.*—Take every possible occasion to converse with the best educated and most cultured persons it may be your privilege to meet. Seek to create such opportunities by obtaining introductions and forming friendships. This involves intelligent choice. The college-student, for instance, may have the choice between passing his time with some thoroughly "good fellow", who is an agreeable companion, but whose talk is chiefly on sports and games, and in college slang, or of spending some of the same hours with a man who is earnest in study, and whose speech bears the stamp of the culture he is acquiring. Without making himself a recluse, he will do best for his own training by giving the preference to the better form of companionship; and where two or more of such type meet, each reaches a higher level by reason of the stimulus—or even the rivalry,—of the other or others. In every walk of life the intelligent seeker after improvement will find some one whose society will bring out the best that is in him. But conversation must be mutual. It is interchange of

thoughts and opinions. For true conversation one must develop the admirable quality of being a good listener. By the power of attending to the words and thoughts of another, even if he does not always agree with him in opinion,—sometimes most when he disagrees,—one is developing himself, and is stirred to his own best in response. Friendship is not full and clear till there is an understood freedom of kindly mutual criticism. One must be able to ask, "Is that the correct meaning, or the correct use, of that word?" and both submit the decision to the arbitrament of the dictionary or of some standard author. Such acquaintance and friendship are among the best means of education, the most vivid, inspiring, and practical.

It goes without saying that one who would have a wide influence in the world of living men must be at home in the language of common life. But that is easily acquired by one who has a healthful interest in human affairs. Granting such interest, he will find that, even when using the language of common life, he will be not less, but more influential because he knows something better. One will best reach an ordinary crowd by a style a little, though not too much, above their own. It is a natural and a rational demand of the human mind that a teacher shall know more than those he undertakes to teach. Moreover, all intelligent people enjoy mental outlook and uplift. Hence the style most effective with great masses of men is that which uses homely and common words, but uses always the best and choicest of them; and also adds some words of higher grade, which they understand, but would not themselves employ in common speech. Such a speaker stands as a prince among the throng.

2. *Public Addresses.*—Let one who would acquire a

good vocabulary take every opportunity of listening to really able speakers in the pulpit or on the platform. The power of taking brief notes will be helpful, but, even without that, he will be involuntarily making swift mental note of felicitous or powerful phrases or sentences, and the process of silent absorption will be continuously going on. Every really able public speaker is an instructor in language, and it is no impeachment of his main purpose to avail ourselves of the help he has so to give.

### III. Doing

This involves the habitual compelling of oneself to expression, and to the best expression. You know that moralists tell us of a factitious morality, which knows all the good maxims, and delights in the sentimental experience of moral emotions, as the Russian countess in a January night in Petrograd is said to have luxuriated in pity and tears for the sufferings of the heroine on the stage, while her coachman, holding her horses and carriage outside, actually froze to death upon the box. It is an accepted principle of morals now, that the more one experiences lofty or tender emotions without acting on them, the more unfitted the character becomes for active and actual virtues.

In the realm of athletics we have a parallel result, in the case of the young fellows who will neglect every great thing in life to watch how other men play baseball. They know just how to applaud every good hit and every good catch, and to roar condemnation for every failure, but would be helplessly scared if called to the bat or into the pitcher's or catcher's place; and those who depended on their supposed skill would be utterly dismayed. Proficiency there comes only from *doing*.

While it is true that in good reading one insensibly absorbs a certain amount of excellent material, and forms certain high standards of taste, yet the occasions and connections in which he would himself be called on to use words in speech or writing are so different from those in which his authors employed them, that unless he has the actual practise in expression, he is almost sure to fall back upon the words and phrases which he uses most in common utterance. In order worthily to utilize the stores acquired by reading and study, one must have the practical training of the athlete or soldier of language in the actual use of words and choice of phrase, to express his own ideas.

*Composition.*—As a method of acquiring such facility, no better thing can be suggested to the beginner than the timeworn practise of what is called "composition," which is something different from writing for a purpose. You are writing to a friend with the knowledge that the mail closes all too soon. You want to get the essential things said, somehow, and down they go in the words that come first. You can not stop to pick and choose among synonyms. Or you are writing "copy" for a newspaper, with the office-boy waiting behind you, and the hum of the presses in your ears. What you have to say must be said somehow, anyhow, as you then can. A young reporter recently told me that in writing up his matter, it was a constant experience to have the office-boy pick up the typewritten sheet the moment he drew it from the machine, so that he could not look back to verify the last word on the finished page, and to know what should be the first word on the page next to be begun. In such work any nice choice of language is impossible.

Those who rely for practise only on writing for a pur-

pose always end with perpetuating their own faults, and the more they write in this way, the more inveterate those faults become. To form a really good style, there must be some writing merely for practise in expression, and with a view to self-criticism, or—if possible—for criticism by some other person. Perhaps no better method could be suggested for this purpose than that which the Boston boy, Benjamin Franklin, with his native shrewdness, devised for himself, as related in his autobiography. He writes:

"About this time [when he was thirteen years old] I met with an odd volume of the 'Spectator.' It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and—making short hints of the sentiments in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the paper again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my 'Spectator' with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. . . .

"I also sometimes jumbled my collection of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order before I began to form the full sentences, and to complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thought. By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them: but I sometimes took the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small importance, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious."

It would be well to try Franklin's method, not merely upon the incomparable "Spectator," but upon any good

writers or speakers of our own day—any really valuable book one is interested in reading, rewriting portions, and after a certain lapse of time comparing them with the originals, and seeing wherein one's own style may be improved by the example of an acknowledged master of expression.

Such practise is for the apprentice period. And apprenticeship is essential. There would be fewer broken hearts, if young authors would remember that they have their trade to learn,—their spurs to win. But in active life one must use his own "writing for a purpose" as a means of self-criticism. For this, Franklin's device of laying aside the written material before criticism is of very great importance. After a certain lapse of time you can read your own manuscript as if it were another's.

If you are writing for publication, or as a sketch for public speaking, or as a report for some special occasion, finish in advance of the time for direct use, if possible. Then, take that manuscript after some hours or days, and read it as if someone else had written it—go over it with dauntless self-criticism, and see where any change of phrase may make it more clear, more elegant, more vigorous, or in any other way more worthy of the purpose for which it is designed. Thus Stevenson is said to have rewritten a single chapter seven times before sending it to the printer.

There is, however, one important caution here, namely: *Stop short of perfection.* You say, "That is easy; or, rather, it is inevitable." Yes, but it is not easy that you should make up your mind to it, which is the thing that must be done. There have been gifted authors whose early work has been greedily read, but as they went on in life they became possessed of the

demon of perfection. Every manuscript was interlined till scarcely legible, every galley-proof and page-proof cut up to the despair of compositors, and the work was never done till actually on the press,—probably to be corrected in the next edition. Their later work was praised by the critics, who were the only persons to read it.

When the style becomes the main thing in the writer's conception of his work, it hinders his pace, so that the thought lags and petrifies. Sometimes the style obscures to him the fact that the thing so beautifully said is not true, or, if true, was not worth saying. When he has put together a collection of euphonious and elegant words, he really supposes he must have said something. A young student went to hear a famous preacher in a fashionable church, and told his father on his return that he had heard a wonderful sermon. "I am glad," said the father. "What was it about?" Then the boy was dismayed to find that he did not know. No idea of the subject, instruction, or exhortation remained in his mind:—nothing but the remembered music of exquisite words.

The only use of a full and rich vocabulary is to express thought. Whenever the style gets in the way of the thought, smash the style. The thought is that for which we write. Will an exquisite style best express it? Then attain that if you can. But if the exquisite style is not the clearest and fittest, or if you can not attain it, then give us a style less exquisite, so that the thought be expressed.

## CHAPTER X

## THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE VOCABULARY. CANT, SLANG, ETC.

The touch of decay is upon all things earthly. Frost, rain, and wind are casting down the mountains, and the rivers are washing the rock-dust far out into the sea. The ocean-waves beat down the cliffs that frown so massively above them. The Pyramids, stripped of the casing of hewn stone that once covered them, are now but rude, though mighty towers in the lonely desert. The Parthenon, still crowning the height of Athens, was desolated long ago, and though still beautiful, is beautiful only in ruin. The stately monuments of imperial Rome are dismantled from the top and dust-embedded from the base.

Language shares the same tendency to decay. The noble Hebrew has become the degenerate Yiddish, as spoken in the Jewish quarters of our cities. The classic language of ancient Greece has a far inferior counterpart in the modern Greek. The Latin of conquering Rome, the language of war and of jurisprudence, of history and of poetry, of philosophy and of religion, has successors in some ways inferior in the Italian, French, and Spanish. The tendencies to the breaking down and the pulling down of our own noble language are as incessant as the pressure of the ocean and the beating of the surge upon a ship at sea. Our schools and colleges have constantly to correct this tendency, which, but for them, would be overmastering.

Now, any highly perfected language is a wondrous development of human power. It is the growth of centuries. It bears embedded in it the history of generations that have lived and died. It has been shaped by the toils of peace, the fatigues, dangers, victories, and disasters of war; by the loves and joys of home; by the laments of earth's myriad tragedies and sorrows; by the explorations of travel, the discoveries of science, and the patient unfolding, pruning, and systematizing of scholarship.

To master such a means of expression, so as to bring into ready and effective use all its varied power, is a mental achievement. To learn a language involves memory,—to acquire and store in labeled pigeon-holes of the brain thousands of words, that shall come forth readily on call; it involves discrimination and judgment—to see that words differ, and where and how they differ, making each the fittest for some special use, and for that very reason most unfit for some other special use; it involves imagination, to catch the poetry that is in words—the pictorial power that gives vividness to speech or writing; it involves foresight—to look ahead through a sentence, and see what words and forms will be needed to complete the expression of thought; it involves self-control,—to hold oneself in hand sufficiently to choose what shall be said, before one is driven to the necessity of utterance—as the athlete swiftly surveys the distance to be passed, the height of the bar, and the character of the ground where he must land, before he springs off for the running jump; it involves, also, the power of mental association, which may be called connected memory. This is one of the most mysterious mental processes, by which an idea suggests a word which we cannot discover to have anything in common

with the idea. What is there in the appearance of a soldier walking a beat or watching at a door to suggest the word *sentinel* or *sentry?* Yet we think of the word the moment we see the armed man. But all these qualities which good use of language demands, benefit thought as much as speech. Memory, judgment, imagination, foresight, self-control, are among the noblest powers of the human mind, and it is a distinct advantage that the acquirement and retention of a highly developed language does involve the constant exercise of these high intellectual powers.

It is important for intellectual vigor and excellence that these high powers of mind which are concerned in the best use of language should be kept in tone and training, and be all awake at each moment of utterance. Especially does the law of association depend upon continual practise, keeping the stores of language in constant connection with the stores of thought. A missionary who had been thirty years in the South Sea Islands found on returning to his native land that he had almost completely forgotten his mother-tongue. All his associations of thought for the lifetime of a generation had been with words of another speech. In a lecture in which he was describing a horseback ride, he could not recall the English word for *stirrup,* and was forced to content himself with saying by circumlocution, "the thing you put your foot in." He had lost the connection between the object and the English word denoting it.

A young lady, who for a while was assisting in her father's store, was commiserated on the number of goods she had been obliged to take down for an unprofitable customer; to which she replied philosophically, "Oh, I don't mind it; you want to know what

you have, and that's about as good a way as any." So in language we need practice and watchful care to "know what we have." Just as the boxer exercises himself in sportive bouts, as the soldier practises on the parade ground and the rifle range, as the ship of war shoots away tons of powder and shot at targets on the sea, so the athlete of language needs to keep in constant practice with the instrument of expression, and to have at every instant all the noblest powers of the mind sensitive, perceptive, and ready for the worthy and fitting choice of words.

Pure English is the use of fitly chosen words in approved combinations. Our language has become what it is by a constant process of selection. The common people, workingmen, tradesmen, travelers, soldiers, fathers, mothers, housekeepers, have brought in the words, and the artists of speech, poets, orators, essayists, dramatists, historians, novelists, rhetoricians, sages, prophets and seers, have toiled and struggled with the material, choosing, shaping, and fitting, to get out of all the very best words for the expression of single thoughts, and the best combinations of words for the expression of connected thought, that the well-constructed sentence may bind the ideas together in strong yet flexible union, as by a golden chain. Each century has added something to the achievements of the century preceding, and the best English speech of to-day is the flower and crown of the life and the scholarship of the English-speaking peoples through five hundred years.

Since the right use of language requires all this, it is easy to see how the decay and impoverishment of language should come unsought. One needs only to let go and do nothing in order to have his power of language decline. A little drowsy carelessness, like that which

makes the engineer run past his signals, a little laziness, taking the first—and poorest—word that comes to mind, and the decline of diction will take care of itself, like the decay of a neglected body. Disease will come of doing nothing.

We see what wholly illiterate people can make of a language by the dialect of our Southern negroes, who were so long wholly without education. With them "brother" became "br'er," as we find it in the "Uncle Remus" stories; "tolerable" became "tolluble" and "certainly" "suttingly"; while the elegant, classic "how comes it?" is hopelessly disguised in the recreant "huccum," used without a suspicion of its meaning as the equivalent of the interrogative adverb "why?" It would need but a few generations, if black and white were alike untaught, to make the English language unrecognizable. One special danger for us now is the great influx of ignorant foreigners, whose very ideal of English is corruption and barbarism;—a danger which our public schools are too imperfectly repressing, while our "yellow journals" are accentuating it in their eagerness for cheap popularity.

1. One of the first results of this mental indolence and negligence is the use of a few words to do duty for many. These overworked words may be excellent in themselves,—even noble and beautiful—but they are utterly inadequate to the work required of them, and hence much of their use is perverted use.

Suppose a tyro in mechanics is put into a carpenter's shop. A chest of fifty or sixty tools is placed before him. But at some time he has happened to work with a chisel, and it has struck his fancy. He says, "This is all I want; never mind those others; lock up the chest." Now, a chisel is really a very admirable tool,

but its use is limited. The bungler wants to cut a board in two. The cross-cut saw would do it quickly and deftly, but he contrives to dismember it by hewing a channel across with his chisel. He needs to smooth the edge, where a good workman would skilfully employ a plane; but he chews the splinters off somehow with the chisel, and though the edge is not very presentable, he concludes he will "let it go at that." So, through all the activities of the shop, he achieves disappointing results, because he will not avail himself of the store of tools for such cases made and provided. You will say, "No mechanic was ever such a fool"; but the workmen of language do such things every day.

Take, for instance, the word *splendid*—an excellent and even noble word. It is from the Latin *splendeo,* shine, and is associated with our word *splendor,* as when we speak of the *splendor* of a starry night or the *splendor* of some achievement of valor or genius. *Splendid* signifies "shining, brilliant, glorious, illustrious"; in such sense the word *splendid* is capable of fitting and admirable use. But *splendid* is now employed by many persons to describe everything that they approve. They speak of a *splendid* suit of clothes, a *splendid* necktie, a *splendid* beefsteak, a *splendid* bargain at a bargain counter, a *splendid* basement with a *splendid* foundation under it, down in the dark ground, a *splendid* ride, behind a *splendid* pair of horses, with a *splendid* coachman; a *splendid* game, a *splendid* batter, catcher or pitcher; a *splendid* doctor or dentist, a *splendid* remedy for a toothache. By that time the noble word has become a poor, common drudge, like a bloodhorse hauling a cab about the city streets. So used, the word *splendid* almost ceases to have a meaning, and becomes a mere symptom of approval. If one would speak of an *elegant*

suit, a *becoming* tie, a *nice* beefsteak, a *good* bargain, a *spacious* basement, a *substantial* foundation, a *delightful* ride, a *fine* pair of horses, an *excellent* coachman, a *capital* game, *expert* batter, catcher or pitcher, a *skilful* doctor or dentist, a *valuable* or *effective* remedy, each word would mean something distinctive, as would many other words that might be substituted. True, one would have to do more thinking, but that is the very thing to be desired. We do not wish to be like Dickens's "Mr. Bumble" who had "enough to do without thinking." It is one prime recommendation of a fitting choice of words that it compels thinking; it keeps the intellect awake; it leads thought out in various and divergent paths; it trains judgment and discrimination; it makes perception quick and alert.

2. Trite expressions may become a serious blemish of speech, especially in what is often supposed to be "fine writing." Bechtel, in his "Slips of Speech," remarks:

"Words and phrases that may have been striking or effective, or witty and felicitous, but which have been worn out by oft-repeated use, should be avoided, such as: "the staff of life," "counterfeit presentment," "the hymeneal altar," "bold as a lion," "throw cold water on," "the rose on the cheek," "lords of creation," "the weaker sex," "the better half," "the rising generation," "tripping on the light, fantastic toe," "the cup that cheers but not inebriates," "in the arms of Morpheus," "paid the debt of nature," "the bourne whence no traveler returns," "to shuffle off this mortal coil," "the devouring element," "a brow of alabaster," to which we may add the remark of the good orthodox old lady in a religious discussion, "Some people believe that everybody will be saved, but *we hope for better things.*" In a word, all use of words and phrases that have be-

come unmeaning by idle repetition must be avoided by painstaking care. These are the second-hand and shop-worn goods of speech.

3. Cant is a blemish to be avoided. Cant is most familiar in its religious sense. In that use it is well defined by Drummond, who says: "There is a type of religious experience natural to a man of fifty, and a different type natural to a youth of fifteen. If the youth of fifteen talks in the style of the man of fifty, that is *cant.*" This sweeps in a great deal of our religious phraseology, which is used, not because it expresses what we mean, now, but because we have inherited it from those with whom it did mean something sacred long ago. Archbishop Whately remarks that many of these inherited expressions are used "not as vehicles of thought, but as substitutes for thought." Such expressions as "renouncing the vanities of the world" are often used without a thought of giving up anything that the speaker really cares for.

It is related of Henry Ward Beecher in his early days in Plymouth Church, that in a prayer-meeting where a member was bemoaning himself in set terms as a "wretched and miserable sinner," Beecher interrupted with the remark, "Very well, brother, just tell us what you've been doing,"—when the penitent suddenly sat down. To know whether we are really sincere we need to translate many old phrases into common speech, and see if we mean them then. If we really do, we shall be apt to use the common speech in expressing them. Even some form of the divine name is used by many persons in public prayer with such tedious reiteration that one cannot help feeling that it is used to fill a blank, and is thus literally "taking the name of the Lord in vain." "Use not vain repetitions as the heathen do." There is

one perfectly appropriate word to use when one comes to a pause of thought in public prayer, and that word is, "Amen."

It may be remarked here, incidentally, that much of profane swearing is a mere substitute for thought. The man thinks of no appropriate word to use, and so falls back upon an oath, the blasphemy in his mouth serving as a disguise for the emptiness of his head.

In a wider sense "cant" denotes the constant use of terms belonging to one's profession or business,—the minister, teacher, lawyer, tradesman or editor using words peculiar to his particular work, or using common words in a special, technical sense. Thus in the newspaper, aside from the editorials, everything is either an "ad" (advertisement) or a "story" (this word denoting almost anything that can be printed except an "ad").

In society, at clubs and in social parties there is an unwritten law against "talking shop," that is, talking of one's special business, and many persons suppose this to be a mere social fad; but it is founded upon a deep law of human nature. "Talking shop" is narrowing, and keeps one narrow. Many a man when he first encounters this prohibition finds himself instantly in a "dry town." He says, "Why, what *can* I talk about?" That shows that he has already become narrow. His whole mental force runs in the grooves of his common work. He is the very man who needs to be put where he can not talk of his business, and must talk of something else. So he will awaken to the wider interests of the world, gain mental freedom, and be on the path of true culture. He will begin to notice things outside his business. He will be hunting for them and reading about them, in order not to be a mere dummy

in a dress coat when he comes into society; and that broadening out is good for him. He will even be a better business man for it, touching human life outside his trade.

Whenever we find it hard to keep from the language of our daily work, that work is getting to be a mental obsession. Then we should force ourselves to change and variety, and with the broadening of interests will come a wider and richer command of pure English suited to the broader interests of the great, living world.

4. Slang may be defined as:

"Any word or phrase current among the uneducated or ruder classes, and not accepted or approved by good literary authority; also, any legitimate word or phrase used in a sense not so approved."

Greenough and Kittredge, in their excellent volume, "Words and Their Ways in English Speech," give a more breezy definition as follows:

"A peculiar kind of vagabond English, always hanging on the outskirts of legitimate speech, but continually straying or forcing its way into the most respectable company, is what we call *slang*."

Slang, for the most part, comes up from the coarser and more ignorant portion of the community. Reading but few books, and those usually of no literary merit, they have nothing to hold them up to high standards of speech. Coarse and rude associations lead to coarse and rude expression. Even words and phrases once excellent in meaning come to express some idea of the saloon or the gutter. If these expressions are vigorous, they quickly become current, for feeble, lethargic, and uninventive minds are glad to be caught up and carried along by those of more originality and force, who are

yet not too far above their own grade. Thus some word or phrase that is rudely picturesque or energetic will go down street after street, through whole sections of a city. The low theaters catch it up, the saloons pass it over the bar, the yellow journals print it, business men who deal with the rough element adopt it, children learn it from their playmates.

There is slang that comes from special classes or professions. A distinct variety of this is "college slang." Students, who know perfectly well that an expression is undesirable, use it defiantly, because it is a badge of studenthood, and the public opinion they care most for —that of their own mates—sustains them in it. It was said of a certain student in Harvard that he had but two adjectives—"stunning" for whatever he approved, and "beastly" for anything he disliked.

Widely prevalent is the slang that consists simply in the perversion of some perfectly good word or phrase. The word "kick" may have proper use, as when the football player "kicks a goal." But when the word is used as meaning "to object," that use is slang. A dear old lady who kept a country post-office failed to deliver a letter in time, and the aggrieved correspondent complained to the Post-Office Department. As his footman stated it, "he *kicked* at that;" on which she remarked, "I suppose that means that he stomped his foot. It showed a bad temper."

"Circus" is a perfectly good word, coming down from the old Roman times, but when it is said that "the professors had a circus over the behavior of the students," the word in that use becomes slang, since it is not to be supposed that there were elephants, lions, tigers, or performing monkeys in the faculty-room.

There is the word "fierce." It is proper to say that

a tiger is *fierce*, but to say that an ill-fitting suit is *fierce* is slang.

The phrase "all right" in its proper use is unexceptionable, as when we say, "Those examples are all right;" or "That price is all right." But the phrase may become very objectionable slang when used in an adverbial sense to mean "certainly," "undoubtedly;" as, "He stole the money all right;" "He knocked him down all right;" meaning, not that larceny or assault and battery are ethically commendable, but that these things undoubtedly happened. In this case the phrase is doubled upon itself in a way that strikingly illustrates the poverty of thought out of which slang arises. Thus it is said of a successful prize-fighter, "He's all right all right;" the first "all right" meaning that he is a competent bruiser, and the second "all right" signifying that the first "all right" is beyond a doubt. Out of three hundred thousand words in the English language, the pitiable poverty of slang cannot find variants enough to prevent using one poor phrase twice over in a little sentence of seven words.

It is proper to say we are "tired" when that is the fact, but the phrase becomes slang when it is used to mean "disgusted" or "annoyed." I may say "Climbing these hills makes me tired," but if I say "That man's self-conceit makes me tired," I am using slang.

The race-track has supplied a slang perversion of the phrase "out of sight." Yet the unspoiled phrase is capable of noble and beautiful use, as when Tennyson writes:

"Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords
with might
Smote the chord of self, which trembling passed in music
*out of sight.*"

Now the question arises, When good words and phrases are thus perverted, what are we to do? Must we give them up because certain classes use them amiss? This may, in rare cases, be necessary. Some words once approved in the best society have gone out of respectable use because slang usage had profaned them beyond recovery.

But, as a rule, it is the part of the educated classes to hold the good word or phrase to its true literary level and use, never using it in any false or doubtful sense, and never recognizing the false use. Ordinarily, if the correct use is firmly held by speakers, writers and teachers, it will conquer in the end. For slang is essentially ephemeral. The uneducated classes have short memories. The lack of fixedness of language among them for want of books and reading affects even their slang dialect, so that expressions at one time common among them are soon forgotten, and a new variety of corruptions takes the place of the extinct monstrosities, while pure English still holds on its way.

As regards the class of slang words that originated in corruption and are below the reach of redemption, it is not the object of this work to supply a slang dictionary.

Any attempt to give a list of slang expressions that are to be avoided is wholly vain. Whoever will look over such lists in any rhetorical book that has been five years on the market will find himself commenting, "Why, nobody says this;—nobody says that." The rude toy is flung away when it is no longer new, so that a list of slang words and phrases becomes obsolete by the time it is printed. The chief test is a negative one. A word or phrase that is not in good literature, and is not used by persons of education and refinement, may

be safely set down as slang,—not to be used, unless, after adequate probation, it shall prove itself worthy of place in the language.

The element which makes slang attractive to some among the better classes is a surfeit of correctness, just as some years ago people became tired of the faultless printing of the Riverside Press, and for awhile we had title-pages with letters of all sizes mixed in hopeless confusion and leaning to all points of the compass—a momentary fashion that passed so quickly as to be now forgotten. But the fickle taste that becomes tired of correctness soon finds deformity tedious when that is made common. Then correctness comes to its own, and those who have kept on using pure English are in the fashion, because the fashion has come back to the standard. Real gold or choice lace does not lose value by not being new.

As a rule the words of the race-track, the gambling table, the liquor saloon, and the lower life of the street are undesirable. To "pass in his checks" can never become a good synonym for "die," because it represents the act of the defeated gambler who has lost everything, and no self-respecting person wishes thus to think of the solemn close of life.

"So live that when thy summons comes
To join the innumerable caravan that moves
To the pale realms of shade when each shalt take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go, not like the quarry slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

The lower life must not be permitted to soil and spoil all that has upheld the noblest souls for ages.

It should be said in fairness that among the enormous multitude of slang words and phrases there are in each generation a few that meet a real need of the language, and win their way to acceptance. Dean Swift, in 1750, objected to the words *sham, banter, bubble, mob,* and *shuffle,* all of which have become approved English. In our own day the word *graft* has probably made its place, because it is an expressive utterance of a fact. Just as the horticulturist sets a twig into a stock of a different kind, so the policeman *grafts* upon his salary protection money for the Sunday saloon, or the politician *grafts* upon his legislative recompense some perquisites from corrupt corporations.

When a slang word or phrase is vigorous and expressive, when it meets a real need of the language, it will gradually be adopted by the educated class; at first in quotation marks, or with some saving clause, such as "to use a common phrase," "so to speak," or the like. Then, at length, with all marks of quotation or apology removed, it will take its place as accepted English. Because our language is alive, it is susceptible of change. It is only the dead languages, like the Latin or the classic Greek, that are fixed and unchangeable.

But the burden of proof is always against the slang expression. Let it be put on probation before it is admitted into good society. Be sure that it is among the elect. Make sure that there is a real need for that word or phrase. If it has genuine merit, it will not be hurt by objection and criticism, while our caution will save our language from the inroad of a host of worthless adventurers.

The only safe rule is: that slang is never to be used except with care and intent, knowing it to be slang, believing it to be expressive for the immediate purpose,

and when no better word or phrase equally forcible can be substituted.

But in the vast majority of cases it will be found that one chief count of the indictment against slang is, that it saves the trouble—and the glory—of thinking. The same cheap word or phrase may be used for any one of a hundred ideas; and it will be found that those who use slang are constantly repeating themselves. Slang is the advertisement of mental poverty.

Because it is easy, because it may make one word or phrase answer for many ideas, thus weakening the discriminating faculty of the mind, because it may be a substitute for thought, slang tends to the impoverishment of the vocabulary. Because it so largely comes from the coarse and rude elements of our population, or even from the baser associations and pursuits, it tends to the degradation of style, whether in conversation or in public speaking or writing.

The stir of the lower life is constantly bringing to the surface mud, slime, antique carving or inlaid work perverted to some base or ignoble use. It is for those who have had the privilege of education and culture to hold fast to what they know is good and beautiful in accepted standards, and thus help the whole community to keep unspoiled the grand inheritance of our toil-won, hard-won, and nobly expressive English speech.

## CHAPTER XI

## DIFFICULTIES IN ENGLISH—THE WAY OUT

To minds of a certain order—often of a very learned order—the English language bristles with difficulties. It is sown thick with perplexities. The fact that English-speaking people are quite generally unaware of these affords the censors no relief. In their view, this simply shows the dense stupidity of the uninstructed "masses," and the careless superficiality of multitudes who mistakenly suppose themselves to be educated.

It is related that a Western cowboy, on a visit to town, applied to a dentist to fill two teeth for him, but the dentist refused, assuring him that the teeth were perfectly sound. Next day the cowboy returned, exclaiming triumphantly, "I went to that dentist over the way, and he filled those two teeth for me." "That is strange," said the first practitioner, "for I could not find any cavities." "Oh, well," was the cheerful reply, "he couldn't till he'd drilled a spell." There are linguistic operators who have drilled the English language so thoroughly that they have published thick books, showing the cavities they would fill with the pure gold of scholarship, manifestly superior to the mere natural growth. Such books have upon the average student much the effect that the reading of patent-medicine advertisements has upon a healthy man. He is quite sure he has some of the symptoms, and all these diseases may be lying in wait for him. So the numberless "errors"

in English may have left their trail over all he has ever spoken or written—who shall say where?—and may blemish all he shall ever yet speak or write. Under such treatment the speaking or writing of English becomes a fearsome thing. As in the ancient prophetic vision, "He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that cometh up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare."

The researches of these experts of inaccuracy remind one of the fox-hunting of Sir Roger de Coverley, when he killed more foxes than were ever before known to be in the country, and confided to the "Spectator" that he used to pay collectors to introduce and liberate the animals surreptitiously, in order that they might be hunted down. The pleasure, be it understood, is not in the elimination of the foxes or the difficulties, but in the hunting of them. Let us note a few of the difficulties and, first,

"The Non-Transferable Gender:"

"If any lady or gentleman has lost *her* or *his* purse, and if *she* or *he* will call at the office, and identify the same as *her* or *his* property, it will be returned to *her* or *him*."

But did any one, in actual fact, ever get entangled in a sentence like this? No man ever found such a cavity in English without drilling for it. This is not a morass into which the unwary traveler may fall, but a ditch deliberately dug for a critic to wade in.

There is less gender in English than in any other of the great, leading languages. But there still appears to be too much. Among the hundreds of thousands of English words, there is just one set of forms—those of the pronoun of the third person singular,—that must be masculine, feminine, or neuter. On that unfortunate pronoun the censors sweep down with the unerring cer-

tainty of vultures from a clear sky on the only bit of carrion in the landscape. They find an amount of perplexity in inverse ratio to the original equipment. In their distress of mind, they have even labored to invent a genderless pronoun, "THON," to be used as a life-preserver in such emergencies. But it has been found impossible to inflate the contrivance sufficiently to keep it afloat and it is now shelved among the curiosities of the dictionary.

But why meet the difficulty at all? Here is a steersman on the open sea, who says, "There's an iceberg dead ahead. What shall I do when I come to it?" The answer is, "Don't come to it. Steer around it." The English language is not a canal, but an ocean. There is always sea-room. Steer around the difficulty. It may require a little foresight. "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; the simple pass on, and are punished." The military device of a flank movement is as valuable in language as in war. Try it on the sentence above given. We refuse to step into the trap. It is easier to keep out than to get out. We say, "Any lady or gentleman who has lost a purse may obtain it at the office by proving property." Could anything be simpler? What has become of the difficulty? Or, we may start with the purse, and say, "A purse has been found, which the owner may obtain at the office by proving property." Still other forms of expression will avoid the difficulty equally well. In fact, the ways around are so many as to make it surprising that any one ever fell in,—but especially that any one was ever entrapped twice.

Nevertheless, it is asked, what shall we do for the "plain people," who stumble into sentences, where they are driven to use "they" or "their" as singular pro-

nouns, to fill out the construction? as, "If any one tries that, *they* will fail," etc. Dear friend, omit the "if," and say, "Any one who tries that will fail." Is the difficulty very serious now? English has an ample supply of sentence-forms, so that we need not continue to wrestle with the one that first occurred to the mind. A sentence is but an envelope for a thought; if the envelope first chosen does not fit, try another. The difficulty will usually vanish with the transition. That is one prime secret of good writing or speaking, and,—like most great discoveries,—one of the simplest applications of common sense.

Suppose, however, that you, at some time, thoughtlessly run into the double-gender sentence too far to get back, what then? Then hew your way out with a vigorous *he, his, him.* The masculine has stood as the representative gender for a "time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary," and that immemorial prescription still holds good, even in this period of militant feminism. Trust it, with the consent of the ages behind you, and every sensible English-speaking person will understand you, and, even in spite of himself, approve.

Occasionally, indeed, we encounter a difficulty so real that it may beset even the unlearned:

WHO OR WHOM

"I met two men $\left\{ \begin{matrix} who \\ whom \end{matrix} \right\}$, I believe, were policemen. They were seeking a man $\left\{ \begin{matrix} who \\ whom \end{matrix} \right\}$, I am told, they found."

Which is right? Here our trouble is not with gender but with case, yet for a precisely similar reason. We have so little declension in English that we do not know

what to do with it when we find it. There is just one of the relative or interrogative pronouns that has a semblance of declension, and we are at our wits' end how to handle it. We are appalled at a word that riots in the luxury of a nominative, possessive, and objective case,—*who, whose, whom.* Well, if you will observe actual usage, you will find that almost all the real perplexity occurs when *who* or *whom* is followed, as in the examples just given, by a parenthetical expression, as "I believe," "I am told," or the like. Very well. Omit, for the moment, the parenthetical expression, since a parenthesis does not affect the construction of the rest of the sentence. Then the form,—either *who* or *whom,*—which is right without that parenthetical expression, is right with it. Thus: "I met two men *who* |————| were policemen. They were seeking a man *whom* |————| they found." The explanation, when given, seems too simple to be needed, for which reason it is rarely given in critical works,—perhaps on the principle that the eternal pursuit of syntax is more desirable than its attainment.

It must be admitted that a somewhat advanced knowledge of English grammar is required for the correct use of *who* or *whom* in certain special constructions, so that inexperienced persons had best treat this pronoun like a firearm, and let it alone if they are not sure at which end it will go off. The relative may be omitted altogether:—"They were seeking a man, and I am told they afterward found *him.*" Even the wayfaring man need not err in that construction. Or, we may keep any parenthetical phrase from intruding between the relative and its verb, in which case all trouble disappears:—"I met two men *who* were, I believe, policemen. They were seeking a man *whom* they after-

ward found, as I am told." Neither of those constructions should puzzle an intelligent boy or girl in the grammar school. Either *who* or *whom* will ordinarily take care of itself if not insulated from its verb by some non-conducting phrase.

But though the spell of *who* or *whom* be thus laid, the conjurer of difficulties reinforces it by the magic word *ever* into a darker and deadlier hoodoo:—"Give the job to { *whoever* / *whomever* } can do it best." Which of these forms is right? Is either right? Let us ask, Who is to have the job? The answer is, "whoever can do it best." All those words go together to describe the successful applicant. The whole clause is one noun-element, and is the object of the preposition "to," so that the sentence properly is, "Give the job to *whoever can do it best.*" We have the answer, but is it worth while? In the time taken to puzzle that out, we could have used any one of several transparently clear forms, as, for instance, "Give the job to the one who can do it best;" and gone on to something more profitable. Another specter is

### The Incoherent Nominative

"Either you or I { *am* / *are* } mistaken." "Neither he nor I { *is* / *am* } to blame." Why does any one want to drive into such a blind alley, where there is so plainly "no thoroughfare"? Still, if you do rush in, how are you to get out? Grammatical rules have been invented to relieve the strain, but few persons can remember them in time to be of service. Here, again, try the flank movement. There are various convenient auxiliaries that are innocent of person and number—

*may, can, must, shall, will, might, could, would, should.* Among these you may choose with absolute safety,—always supposing you are not using *thou* as one of your pronouns, a supposition which, in modern usage, may commonly be taken for granted. You may say, "Either you or I *may be—must be—will be found to be—may prove to be*—mistaken;" "Neither he nor I *can be* to blame"—or "*should be* blamed." Another simple device is to detach any nominative after the first, and let it follow in a separate clause, as: "Either *you* are mistaken, or *I* am," etc. With a very moderate degree of skill, one instinctively steers clear of forms thus inherently awkward or clumsy, so that specimens of them are rarely to be found, except in the critical books that lament their occurrence.

### "The Non-Transferable Auxiliary"

"Arkansas never *has,* and never *will be* represented by a better man." Of course, the simple way is to fill out the construction:—"Arkansas never *has been,* and never *will be,*" etc. But all possibility of blundering would be obviated by keeping the past and future expressions entirely separate:—"Arkansas never *has been represented* by a better man, and never *will be.*" A newspaper account of conditions among the Mexican refugees at Fort Bliss, a few years ago, reads as follows:—"Not less than a baby a day, and on one day five, *has been born* since the camp was formed." This unexpected crowding of population appears to have had a sympathetic effect in crowding the reporter's statement. We are so perpetually warned against using too many words, that we lose sight of the possibility of using too few. By an added clause the statement becomes at least grammatical. "Not less than a baby a day

*has been born,* etc., and on one day five *were born.*" Use words enough. English will not bear more than a certain amount of jamming. That is a merit of the language, requiring orderly development of thought as a prerequisite to simplicity of expression.

### "I Don't Think So"

Alas for the gentle and patient rows of Normal School teachers and Chautauqua victims who are dragooned into dread of the harmless expression, "I don't think so!" The instructor has found in his dictionary that "to think" is "to exercise the mental faculties; to carry on the process of thought." Hence, to say that you do not think is an awful thing. It is a confession of imbecility. It is a pity that the critic did not read just a little further in his dictionary, instead of going off at half-cock. Then he would have ascertained that "to think" means also, "to entertain a particular opinion." If I do not "entertain the particular opinion" that the critic "entertains," that may be disappointing to him, but is it necessarily absurd in me? Our answer to him is, "I think, indeed, but not as you do. I think, but not so. In short, I do not think so." But, why not say, "I think not?" Because that is more than an equivalent, signifying that I definitely entertain a contrary opinion, which may not be the fact. When I say, "I do not think so," I simply do not accept the "particular opinion" advanced, though I may not hold a definite opinion to the contrary.

### Preposition Ending Sentence

We are told, "Never end a sentence with a preposition." Why not? Because it cannot be done in Latin. Very well. That is one of the disabilities of the Latin. But English is independent in origin and idiom, and

can do more and better things in many ways than the Latin ever did or could. The English usage that may on occasion throw a preposition to the end of the clause or sentence has come down from ancient days, as indicated by the quotations given in a previous chapter (Ch. VII, p. 151). Take one quotation there given:

"The soil out of which such men as he are made is good to be born *on*, good to live *on*, good to die *for*, and to be buried *in*."

We should weaken this indescribably, if we were to make it read:

"—— good *on which* to be born, *on which* to live, *for which* to die, and *in which* to be buried."

Why? Because we have separated the important words in each clause by the uncared-for particles, *on*, ——*for*——*in*——*which*,——and the mind must hurry past these to reach the items really of interest, finding the elements of constructive formality very much in its way. Unfettered and vigorous speech brushes these formalities aside, gives first place to the words expressing the important thought, and then pays its grammatical scot in the preposition appended at the end of the clause or sentence,—"good to die *for*," etc. It is an element of power in the English language that it can thus march across technicalities to attain the great purpose of speech—the expression of thought.

It may be further mentioned here that the relative pronoun *that* necessarily sends the preposition to the end of the clause or sentence:—"This is the point *that* I insist *upon*." There is no difficulty of English here, except the "difficulty" of imposing a misfit rule of Latin syntax upon English sense. But nothing suits the difficulty-hunter so well as to fall foul of an ac-

cepted English idiom, sure to recur. It is like a runway for game. Set your snare across that, and you will infallibly catch somebody.

We believe that Purists have their use. It is well that some boundaries should be delimited, even by wire fences, to prevent all speech from relapsing into a linguistic wilderness; but it would sadly hinder freedom of communication and enjoyment of nature, if barbed wires bordered every sidewalk and every woodland path. What we resent is the assumption that difficulties are the main thing in English, constituting its chief charm and the prime purpose of its existence. We object to arbitrary tests set like the two pillars at the entrance of the Mohammedan temple, so that no devotee who cannot squeeze between them can hope to enter Paradise.

Correct English is a comparatively slight thing,—an incidental propriety,—like a man's keeping his face clean, which it is no special merit to observe, but very discreditable to neglect when the exigencies of life make it possible, though the soldier or the sailor, the miner or the machinist, may well have things so much more important to do that he can not for a time even think of that. Correctness of speech is but incidental to the main purpose of speech. We need correct English, indeed; but, far more than that, we need English worthy of its history and its destiny,—noble, achieving, masterful English, instinct with life, able to move the world. There is a correctness so deadly dull that a good, vigorous blunder would be a relief and a delight. There is such a thing as freedom, the birthright of the Anglo-Saxon race, and this freedom pervades our language. English has refused to accept the iron rules within

which so many other languages are corseted, and continues to refuse and resent the stays.

Dr. Hugh Blair has devoted twenty-six pages of his "Lectures on Rhetoric" to critical examination of four of Addison's papers in the "Spectator," and certainly convicts that illustrious author of some inaccuracies. Yet, when Dr. Blair reconstructs a sentence, and tells us what Addison "might have said," we are almost invariably glad that Addison did not say it. If he had set his heart on the formal correctness his critic demands, that correctness would have stolen his simplicity and his charm. That folly Addison never committed. Ease and naturalness marked all he wrote. As the result, the carouse-wearied gentry of Queen Anne's day read his seemingly off-hand essays at their breakfast tables, and amended their ideals and their morals. Thousands since have read with delight the uncorrected "Spectator"; but have any, except a few curious rhetoricians, ever read Dr. Hugh Blair's corrections? There are those who can tell of Sir Walter Scott only that he fell into certain errors of style, and even of grammar. Yet the majority of readers have never found one. They recognize those that the critics have hunted down, but in their own reading they have been carried past them unconsciously by the rush of incidents or the splendor of description, just as Scott himself, in the fervor of composition, was swept by. When he wrote "Guy Mannering" in six weeks and "The Bride of Lammermoor" in two weeks, he could only follow the flashing thought, and trust for words and construction to the habitual language of a cultured gentleman.

And he did well. Every great author or orator who has won and held the attention of the world has sometimes, or often, let himself go. No better rule can be

given to the young writer or speaker than to get full of information, thought, emotion, enthusiasm, — then trust the facile, flexible English speech, if you have once learned it well, and make a hearty, genuine blunder when you must, so that you get something real really said or written. In revision the author may well become his own critic; but, even then, let him beware that the critic does not exterminate the creator. Even so simple a movement as going down stairs cannot be performed at once swiftly and securely by fixing attention on every step; the stairs will obliterate the stairway. It is related of Father Taylor, of the Seaman's Bethel in Boston, that, at one time, finding himself involved in a sentence with no possible outlet, he paused, and exclaimed, "Brethen, I've lost the track of the nominative case, but one thing I know,—I'm bound for the kingdom of heaven!" and the audience responded "Amen! Amen!" to the preacher who thought more of salvation than of syntax.

Keeping one's mind on the hunt for difficulties in English makes one blind to all the effectiveness and majesty of our noble language. Here is a man, for instance, who has heard of persons slipping to death on orange-peel or banana-skins, and he walks the streets of New York with scrutinizing gaze ever fixed on the pavement, and never sees the high buildings, the rushing crowds, the stir of a great life of humanity all about him. Around the author or the orator is the tide of life, with its towering achievements, struggle momentarily crystallizing into history, grand ideals of possible advancement and excellence shining in the heaven above, and closing every vista of the yet untraveled way. Movement, enterprise, conquest, are his inspiration. Difficulties, indeed, are to be avoided, but only that they

may not hinder that full and effective expression that shall move humanity through the medium of speech. The railway engineer oils his engine, but only that it may be free to move; the mission of that assemblage of power, whose throttle is in his hand, is something more than avoidance of friction; it must act, advance, accomplish results, speeding its freight of human life and treasure far on into the hopeful distance; and nothing but grim necessity may be allowed to hold it even momentarily in the repair-shop.

# CHAPTER XII

## CLEARNESS OF STYLE—I

### THE OUTFIT FOR THE SPEAKER OR WRITER

To say what one means so that it will be readily understood by some one else would seem to be one of the simplest and easiest things imaginable. As a matter of fact, it is one of the most difficult. It is probable that one mind never exactly expresses its meaning to another. If one uses so simple an expression as, "It is a fine day," that does not necessarily convey to the mind of the hearer the same thought that was in the mind of the speaker. The speaker may be thinking of the beauty of the scenery, the light on the hills, the sunlit clouds floating across the sky; the hearer may think only of the general agreeableness of the weather, and of the fact that he does not need an umbrella. Harriet Beecher Stowe in her "Oldtown Folks" thus describes the vain appeal of a glorious sunrise to a certain type of mind:

"The next morning showed as brilliant a getting up of gold and purple as ever belonged to the toilet of a morning. There was to be seen from Miss Asphyxia's bedroom window a brave sight, if there had been any eyes to enjoy it,—a range of rocky cliffs with little pin-feathers of black upon them, and behind them the sky all aflame with bars of massy light, darting hither and thither, touched now the window of a farmhouse, which seemed to kindle and flash back a morning salutation; now they hit a tall scarlet maple, and now they pierced between clumps of pine, making their black edges flame with gold; and over all, in the brightening sky, stood the morning star, like a great, tremulous tear of light, just ready to fall on a darkened world.

"Not a bit of all this saw Miss Asphyxia, though she looked straight out at it. Her eyes and the eyes of the cow, who, with horned front, was serenely gazing out of the barn window at the same prospect, were equally unreceptive.

"She looked at all this solemn pomp of gold and purple, and the mysterious star, and only said: 'Good day for killin' the hog.'"

In fact, the ordinary reader seldom catches at first reading the full thought which a great poet or essayist has in mind,—if, indeed, he ever attains it; and the orator never knows, except by the effect of his speaking, how much of his thought has actually reached his audience. The aim of perspicuity is to convey the thought of the speaker or writer to the mind of the hearer or reader just as clearly as thought can be conveyed by human speech.

The word *perspicuity* may be defined as "see-through-it-ive-ness," being derived from the Latin *perspicio*, "see through," from *per*, "through," and *specio*, "look—see." Perspicuity is the quality of presenting thought in words so that the *thought* will be *seen readily, through the words.* Perspicuity is the first, vital, fundamental quality of style. Without being understood, all words are vain. Thus the great Apostle of the Gentiles writes:

"And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except that they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

"So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue *words easy to be understood,* how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air. . . . .

"Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me."

Perspicuity, or clearness, is essential in order to make it of any use for one to speak or write at all. The perspicuous style opens to reader or hearer the speaker's or author's very thought, not hindered by the words that express it, but even enhanced in clearness and attractiveness by the perfect transparency of the expression. The perspicuous style may indeed be dry or plain, or even rugged or abrupt. Yet it has this one merit, that it can be understood. One who cares enough about the subject can get the idea, even where there is no beauty of expression, if there is but this perfect clearness. Hence, the first study of every speaker or writer, especially of the young or inexperienced, should be to express himself so as to make each thought absolutely clear. Then he may adorn it with every touch of beauty of which he is capable, so that the ornament never hides nor obscures the thought. The "safety first" of travel must be answered by the "clearness first" of spoken or written language. If ever clearness fails in beauty it gains, nevertheless, in strength. Men instinctively trust the expression which lies clear before them like a level and open road, and the trust of those addressed is to the speaker or writer an element of power. Yet clearness has also a beauty of its own. The clear or perspicuous style is like a pane of plate glass, of which the eye takes no note, absorbed in observing what is to be seen through it. But when our attention is once directed to the medium, we find a rare beauty in that sheet of firm, almost viewless crystal, lost in its own transparency.

"Perspicuity in writing is not to be considered as merely a sort of negative virtue, or freedom from defect. It has higher merit; it is a degree of positive beauty. We are pleased with an author, we consider him as deserving praise,

who frees us from all fatigue of searching for his meaning; who carries us through his subject without any embarrassment or confusion; whose style flows always like a limpid stream, where we see to the very bottom."

So writes Dr. Hugh Blair in his "Lectures on Rhetoric" (Lect. 10, p. 102). He sums up the matter as follows:

"Perspicuity, it will be readily admitted, is the fundamental quality of style; a quality so essential in every kind of writing that for the want of it nothing can atone. Without this, the richest ornaments of style only glimmer through the dark, and puzzle instead of pleasing the reader. This, therefore, must be our first object, to make our meaning clearly and fully understood, and understood without the least difficulty. 'Discourse,' says Quintilian, 'ought always to be obvious, even to the most careless and negligent hearer; so that the sense shall strike the mind as the light of the sun does our eyes, though they are not directed to it. Wherefore care must be taken, *not only that one may understand, but that he cannot possibly fail to understand.*'"

Perspicuity is called a "relative quality"; relating, that is, on the one side to the speaker or writer, and on the other to the hearer or reader. Let us consider, under this double aspect, the qualifications of the speaker or writer. For clear expression he must have:

1. Some Clear Idea to Express.—No man can give more or better than he has. If you would speak or write for others, what have you to give them? Is that sure and clear in your own mind? You can not possibly make clear to other minds what is dim, vague, or confused in your own. Hence, the very first condition of clear expression is a clear idea to be expressed.

Here is a man who knows nothing of the conditions produced by the French Revolution of 1789-93, of the raw volunteers who crowded to the colors, of the med-

ley of adventurers who became their officers, and of the personal qualities of the young conqueror who then arose; of his treatment of defeated nations and subjugated provinces, and its effect upon the temper of those peoples; of the ratio of the loss of French lives in the field to the natural increase of the French population; of the economic situation created by the strain of incessant war. Now ask that man to give a clear statement of the causes of the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte. You are asking not for bricks without straw, but for bricks without clay.

Or a business house receives a letter offering certain goods according to sample sent. Many questions are involved: Is the house that makes the offer trustworthy, so that goods may be depended upon to be according to sample? Are they efficient, so that delivery will be prompt and sure? Will the goods suit the local public taste? How many could we probably use? Have we facilities for storing and handling them till sold? If we buy at price offered, can we sell so as to make a fair profit? Can we conveniently pay for the goods on delivery? If not, what credit should we need, that the receipts from sales may enable us to meet the account? Suppose some clerk, in whose mind not one of these items is settled, attempts to answer that proposal. How can he possibly write a clear letter? He will soon find the various items chasing each other without order or coherence, and the attempted answer on one item interfering with the possible answer to another. The true business man answers every one of these preliminary questions in his own mind, at least, before he begins to frame his reply. Then he can dictate in a few lines an absolutely clear letter, for he knows every requirement and every limitation to be insisted on. Having satis-

fied himself, for instance, of the standing and dependability of the dealers in question, and of his own facilities and needs, he has only to write:

"In reply to yours of ———, you may send us (a specified quantity) of the goods named, the same to be strictly according to sample, and to be delivered on (a specified date) with bill payable in thirty days."

The clear thinking that has gone before makes the necessary statements few and plain.

In the affairs of common life, in all contemplative and studious utterance, behind every great decision, is clear thinking as the prerequisite of clear expression. It is much for a thinker to put an idea into words that are thoroughly clear to himself. Scholars of the earlier centuries would write their thoughts in Latin, then supposed to be the only language for the learned; afterward, perhaps, as a condescension to the general public, they would translate their statements into the "vulgar tongue." The thought once written in the Latin was fixed, and, if worthy to live, became the enduring property of the world. So, always, when he has once reduced his thought into words that are definite and adequate for himself, the thinker has crystallized that thought in speech, and given it imperishable form; then he, or another thinker who knows his vocabulary, can at any time translate the statement into simpler or more popular terms. Fasten down your thought so that you, at least, know definitely what it means.

2. The Habit of Clear Thinking.—This goes beyond any single occasion. No man can be sure of clear thought upon one occasion who is not in the habit of clear thinking on all occasions. Habit largely dominates action, and in excitement or emergency always

controls. A young person by courtesy called a student, who has never formed a clear idea of one lesson studied, never given a clear rendering of one sentence supposed to be translated, never gained one clear idea from any lecture heard, whose reading is of the flitting trash of the cheap magazine, and whose ordinary conversation drifts in that underworld of indeterminateness commonly known as slang, sits down upon some supreme occasion and says, "Go to, I will now write a clear discussion of this important subject assigned me." As well might the untrained clerk rise from his desk and go out to distinguish himself on the instant upon the baseball or football field.

One who would attain perspicuity of spoken or written style must make clearness of thought and expression the habit of common life,—the experience of every day. Never tolerate a vague idea in your own mind. Do not leave a single thought at loose ends. In the many cases where you can not at once reach a conclusion, be clear as far as you go: "So far, such seems to be the fact or the truth." If there is a doubt, make clear to yourself what you doubt: "the unsettled item is this, ———." Leave not an unfinished sentence in your own thinking; see it through to a period, just as if dictating to a stenographer. So all your thinking will be precise and sure.

Habitually clear thinking will spontaneously tend to clear expression. Therefore, make that your positive endeavor. Send a swift thought ahead to shape what you have next to utter. Do not fear a brief pause when necessary to think a sentence through before beginning it. If your hearer is delayed at the start, he will save the time in reaching the conclusion; instead of a local with many stops, one may well wait for an express

train that goes straight through. Make your reading serve the same purpose. Read the works of those who have had a definite message to give to the world, and have known how to give it so that the world can understand. Avoid like a pestilence the craze for epigram and paradox, of which the charm is that it is like a Delphic oracle, equally suited to the most contradictory results. Read those things which are so clear that, if right, they may be known to be right and, if wrong, may be proved to be wrong. In this earnest world, why fight with shadows and fogs and windmills? Listen to the most thoughtful and definite utterances you can hear from pulpit and platform. Converse with those who have something to say and know how to say it. To a thinker so self-disciplined, the instantly intelligible expression will come to seem the only natural expression, and any vague, clumsy, indefinite utterance will become almost impossible.

3. All Attainable Knowledge is, indeed, a prerequisite to clear thinking, but it is important enough to be treated by and for itself. We say "all attainable knowledge,"—not all that is possible in the nature of things,—for which life does not allow us to wait,—but the fullest attainable within our limits of time, place, and circumstance. Life continually compels us to act on imperfect knowledge, if we would act at all. It was with imperfect knowledge that Columbus brought his keel to graze the shore of the Western World. But within the limits of what is for you attainable, bring together all possible data for clear opinion and decision. The very last item gathered may be the most important, or may be the key to all the rest. An old clergyman was asked by a young preacher to tell him how to prepare a sermon. "Fill up the cask, young man," said the vet-

oran; "fill up the cask. Then, whenever you tap it you'll get a stream." For the briefest statement one can not know too much. He who has the fullest store of knowledge is in a position to select the necessary or the most important items, and to be sure that—so far as he can yet make it—his every statement is adequate.

Such knowledge is important, not only for knowing what to say, but also for knowing what not to say. We are reminded of the comment of the old colored brother on the theory that God is ignorant of some things because he chooses not to know them:—" 'Pears like God would have to know everything 'fore he could know what not to know." The speaker or writer is in just that case. He needs to know all that might be said before he can know what not to say. You may always be sure that the statement which says just enough, and with perfect clearness, is the result of thorough knowledge and careful study. Every path of scientific research is strewn thick with what the man of science calls "dead work," useful only as the means of discovering what cannot be known or done, or as leading up to what alone is valuable to know.

Such "dead work" may never be mentioned in the worker's published results, or mentioned only by a passing reference to what can not be; but with how sure a step may the guide advance who has made himself absolutely sure of not straying into any impassable road or cul-de-sac! Every inventor, every deep thinker, has much of the same experience. The discourse you hear or the book you read with rapt attention is the better for the thoughts resolutely shut out, or for the matter actually written, and then consigned to the waste-basket. Clearness comes often from the non-interference of that which can not be made clear.

4. Systematized Knowledge.—There is probably no person more helpless, either for speech or action, no one more incapable of a clear opinion, than the victim of a mass of undigested facts and ill-assorted conclusions. One who would be clear must analyze data and arguments, either in formal abstract or in the silent action of his own mind. A very successful editor kept near his desk two drawers, one labeled "May" and the other labeled "Must." Everything absolutely necessary for the next issue of the paper went into the "Must" drawer. That drawer must be emptied before the paper went to press. The things desirable, but not essential, went into the "May" drawer, and from that the foreman might take out more or less, according as space or other circumstances would permit. Such an analysis *may* and *must* items should be in the mind of a speaker or writer, as he runs through the data pertaining to the matter on which he is to speak or write.

5. Conference with Other Minds.—No one mind knows everything. No one mind sees its own knowledge in all possible lights. Sometimes the remark of a child will illuminate the thought of a sage. The man on the street sees what would not occur to the scholar in his study. It is related of a nobleman on the Scottish border that, walking across his estate with a shepherd one bright morning, he observed the sheep all clustered on the shady side of the hills. "Now, if I were a sheep," said his lordship, "I would get on the sunny side." "Gin ye waur a sheep, my laird, ye wud hae mair sense," replied the shepherd, who knew that the sunshine, so agreeable to the man, would be oppressive to the sheep burdened with a heavy fleece. One can never tell what sidelights may be thrown upon a topic by the least promising adviser. Often, too, the statement of a

matter to another shows one how much statement is needed, and what may require explanation that at first seemed obvious.

Then, the human mind is so constituted that it arouses itself by contact with another mind to do its own best thinking. How often do we ask a person a question and see the answer before he can reply. As a rule, the solitary thinker becomes limited and one-sided. Then he often retires into a proud contempt of the "gross intellects" of the great mass of mankind, who can not understand what he has made unintelligible. The ordinary speaker or writer may set it down as a fixed principle that if he can not explain an idea so that it will be understood by rational men of average education, there is some fault either in the idea or in his explanation. In the attempt so to explain to others his own mind is aroused and vivified. His knowledge is increased by the very attempt to impart it. Thus that eminent educator of the nineteenth century, Moses Stuart, once remarked, "I have never really known anything until I have either taught it or written upon it." According to Bacon's succinct and vigorous statement:

"Friendship . . . maketh daylight in the understanding out of darkness and confusion of thoughts; neither is this to be understood only of faithful counsel, which a man receiveth from his friend, but before you come to that, certain it is, that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another: he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; *finally, he waxeth wiser than himself:* and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation. Neither is this . . . fruit of friendship, in opening the understanding, restrained only by such friends as are able to give a man counsel. They are indeed best; but, even without that, a

man learneth of himself, and bringeth his own thoughts to light, and whetteth his wits as against a stone, which itself cuts not. In a word, a man were better relate himself to a statua or a picture, than to suffer his thoughts to pass in smother." *

6. Mastery of Language.—The choice of words for perspicuous utterance will be more fully considered from the side of the hearer or reader; here it must be treated as part of the author's or orator's equipment. When on his feet before an audience, when striving to get something said, one can not go scouting for words he does not know. The writer who attempts to hammer out a vocabulary in stress of composition will chill all fervor, eagerness, and range of thought. His writing will have a smack of artificiality—it will "smell of the lamp." These close researches of items will pin him down to the little steps of the grain-pecking barnyard fowl, in contrast with the eagle's soaring, sweeping flight. The author full of an impelling idea will do best to put it down fast, even in what he knows to be inadequate words. Time for revision can be found or made, but the fire and glow and outreach of thought once chilled can not easily, if ever, be rekindled. For the time the author is like a soldier in battle, who must use the weapons he has—ample cartridges if possible; if not, the bayonet, or even the musket-butt,—to strike somehow. But cartridges and other equipment should be provided before the battle. Words must be accumulated in such store that they will be snatched automatically, the speaker or writer being often scarcely aware of the felicity of his choice, because the words are so habitual to his thought that their use seems as natural and instinctive as drawing breath. For the most effective ora-

* Bacon: "Essays," On Friendship.

torical or literary power, one must have a wide and rich vocabulary in actual possession and use, alive with all the most vivid associations of thought and life. Then the right word, according to the familiar phrase, will "spring to the lips." His experience with words will recall what Webster said of facts, arguments and illustrations in his Reply to Hayne: "Only to reach up, pluck down a thunderbolt and hurl it at him."

Here must be noted that psychological principle that the mind tends always to follow the track of a previous thought as the line of least resistance. Words, once used, have a tyranny over thought. Beware of ever writing a poor, confused, or clumsy sentence, because your own words are liable to dominate your thought in what you afterward write.

Where repetition is detected, you will often find something behind the literary fault. You have used that word the second time, not because you wanted it, but because you had used it before, and it has switched your very thought aside, in accordance with the psychological tendency of the mind to follow the channel of a previous thought. Seeking the non-repetitious word, you get one that expresses clearly the new thought, not confused by a dim echo of the old.

Every argument for the attainment of a wide and rich vocabulary,—every argument against the mental slovenliness of slang,—is an argument for the possibility of perspicuity. The vocabulary equal to all occasions enables the speaker or writer to be clear on every occasion. If the speaker's or writer's idea is clear to himself, the meaning of the words he uses must also be clear to himself. Otherwise, with the best intentions, he will confuse the hearer or reader.

7. Moral Courage.—It often requires no small degree

of courage to express one's meaning with absolute plainness.

It is related of an eminent diplomat that on one occasion he spent a long time writing, revising, and correcting an important letter, and then submitted it to a friend with a request for his opinion upon it. The friend read and reread it, and at length remarked, "It is beautifully written and seems very clear, but, if you will pardon my saying so, I cannot discover from it exactly what you mean to do." "Ah, thank you," exclaimed the author, "it is a perfect success," and at once signed and despatched it. That was the result he had labored for. Many persons attain similar results without conscious endeavor, simply from the fear that they may inadvertently say just what they mean.

The schoolboy with a lesson imperfectly learned stammers through an "er—er" recitation in constant fear that he may fall into some definite statement, and that statement be wrong. A college student confessed to a classmate that he had great trouble in his Greek exercises to distinguish between the acute and the grave accents, which lean opposite ways. His friend replied, "I don't. I make them all exactly perpendicular, and the professor can't tell for his life which way I meant them to lean." The reluctant witness, fearing to perjure himself, and fearing more to tell the truth, equivocates through ambiguous statements which he hopes can not be construed into exact affirmation or denial of important matters. The preacher, doubting some points of the accredited creed of his church, takes refuge in misty platitudes which he trusts will neither explicitly affirm nor deny. The politician, not yet sure which way the tide will turn, talks of good government, the will of the people, the public welfare, in terms which will

apply equally well to any decision. The social reformer, who does not want to say, even to himself, "confiscation of property," when a stout argument might back him up against that wall involves the whole subject in misty declamation, and escapes in nebulous clouds of rhetoric.

There are, indeed, times when prudence, kindness, even duty, call for an honorable reserve, but so far as speech is used, it finds its best exercise in putting a sure and definite meaning into unflinching words.

The medieval Florentine, Nicholas Machiavelli, had the courage of his unscrupulousness, and in his "Prince" advocated clearly and coolly what thousands of leaders have done under euphemistic names. Macaulay says of him, that "His only fault was that, having adopted some of the maxims then generally received, he arranged them more luminously, and expressed them more forcibly than any other writer."

For this he has been execrated by the mass of men until

> "Out of his surname they have coined an epithet for a knave, and out of his Christian name a synonym for the Devil."

Yet, even so, he did better than he would have done through vagueness or obscurity with the same underlying motive. There the vices stand, pilloried for all time. The frank and avowed opponents of truth and right have often rendered it unintended service. Men seeing just what they mean have declared, "This is what we will not have." It is not the evil boldly outspoken, but the evil deliberately veiled, that is dangerous.

The frank, transparent statement of an intolerable conclusion often rescues the author himself. He says, "My reasoning leads up to this; but this is abominable.

There must be a flaw in the argument that necessitates such a result,'' and he studies back till he finds the error. It is doubtful whether Benedict Arnold could have persevered in his course, if he had called every act by its right name: if he had frankly said to himself, ''This is downright treachery. I am about to betray my people, my commander and my comrades in arms, who have trusted me and faced death at my side. If I succeed I shall send the Continental armies to defeat and the leaders to the scaffold. I shall smirch my own military record, by an action which no soldier ever forgives. Even if the British win, they will scorn the traitor who gave them the victory.'' All his cherished grievances would have seemed infinitesimally petty, and all promised rewards worthless and mean before the clear statement of what his action meant.

Thus perspicuity is far more than a convenience or beauty of style. In its fullest exercise it is the outspeaking of a brave and resolute spirit, and so is strong.

What gives his special power to the desperate man? Absolute clear thinking. He has decided what he must and will have at any cost. He has canvassed all possibilities affecting himself. Wounds, death, prison, dishonor, all are nothing in his thought. He has canvassed all that his action may bring to his antagonist. Pain, distress, poverty, hardship, death, of his intended victim are nothing in the assailant's thought. He is deaf to argument or entreaty, for he has discounted all restraining motives, and put them out of consideration. He will take the maddest chances, because they can bring him nothing but what he is ready to meet.

The same qualities appear in nobler exercise. The ''six hundred'' of the Light Brigade receive the fatal order, form without an instant's hesitation in battle

array, the commander, as he rides to their head, saying to a friend whom he passes, "Here goes the last of the Cardigans!" Their minds had been made up long before to all that the day could bring, and their clear answer to the command was instant action. These qualities were displayed by Washington when, touched by the sufferings of Boston resulting from the enforcement of the Boston Port Bill, he exclaimed (at the provincial convention at Williamsburg, August 1, 1774): "I will raise a thousand men, subsist them at my own expense, and march with them at their head for the relief of Boston." The men of the Continental Congress, with the Declaration of Independence before them, had forecast all it might involve when they signed their names under the words, "And, for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

## CHAPTER XIII

## CLEARNESS OF STYLE—II

### AS SECURED BY FITTING CHOICE OF WORDS

Whatever mystic value there might be in an expression of thought understood only by the mind that originated it, such an expression would be rhetorically worthless. Rhetoric has been well defined as: "The art of perfecting man's power of communicating to others his mental acts or states by means of language." In rhetorical estimate, the sole object of speaking or writing is,—not that thought may exist,—but that it may be conveyed or communicated to others. "Communicate" is from the Latin communis, "common", and signifies to make something the common property of two or more persons. In thought or speech, without the union of two or more minds, there is no "communication." If one could have the mental vision of a star-eyed angel, he would be helpless to "communicate" anything to men by speech unless he could use some language that men could understand. Perspicuity begins in the clear thought of orator or author, but does not become an accomplished fact till the same thought illuminates the mind of hearer or reader with equal clearness. The supreme test of success in reaching men by speech is not what you give, but what they receive. Whatever you may offer, you really give them only what they get. So Tennyson opens his "Day Dream" with the question,

"But would you have the thought I had,
And see the vision that I saw?"

"The thought I *had*" is but one pier of a bridge, from which the fairest structure stretches out over empty space, unless and until it reaches a support on the farther shore in the receiving mind. Of what shall that be built? Of intelligible words joined in fitting construction, so that each shall help to convey the meaning of all.

Intelligible Words.—There are, indeed, ways of expressing one's meaning otherwise than by words, as by looks and tones, which are often profoundly significant. Yet these are always more or less vague, as appears from the fact that one will be aware that another is angry, but study long to guess what displeased him, and at last very likely guess wrong. It is beyond a doubt that looks and tones greatly help the impression of spoken words, whether in oratory or in common speech, so that many things are well understood that are very ill uttered, and many sentences that are never finished. Something may be done by expressive signs, as of the finger on the lips to indicate silence. But one needs only to deal with persons of whose language he knows absolutely nothing to convince himself how very little way this sign-language, by itself, will carry him. The ultimate reliance must be upon the spoken or written word, and each word must be understood in the same sense by the one who uses and by the one who hears or reads it.

Since expression is chiefly by use of words, one who has but an imperfect command of words can not attain more than imperfect expression, however clear the ideas he may have to express. Thus a Japanese student appended to a set of examination-papers the following note to his teacher:

"I sent the answer to the second problem in this lesson in double, as I couldn't clear my mind of which is the better. Will you kindly pass your sight through them?"

He knew, and we know, what he meant, yet the effect of the whole is queer and confusing. We must translate the sentences to ourselves before we quite apprehend their meaning. "In double" may be a Japanese idiom, but is not an English idiom. We are not quite sure what is meant till we put it into other words. He could not have written "in duplicate," for he did not mean that. The two solutions were *not* duplicates, for they were not alike. The very simplest expression would have been "in two forms," from which one gets the meaning without a second thought.

"Could not clear my mind *of* which is the better," is very blind. It gives us an idea, but an idea confused and dim. He might have written, "make clear to my mind," or he might have used the shorter phrase, "satisfy my mind," or—better—"satisfy myself." "Pass your sight through them" is intelligible, but queer, and its oddity checks and hinders thought, while we put it into familiar words, "glance through (or over) them."

How many supposedly familiar English words are ill-understood by persons of limited education is shown in Mark Twain's "English as She Is Taught," which is full of gems taken (he assures us) from the examination papers of school-children. Thus: "The men employed by the Gas Company go around and *speculate* the meter." On which Mark comments: "Indeed they do, dear; and when you grow up, many and many's the time you will notice it in the gas bill." To that ingenuous youth "inspect" was an incomprehensible word, and "speculate" equally ill-understood, but somewhat more familiar. In the remark, "Holmes is a very profligate

and amusing writer," evidently the two words "profligate" and "prolific" were both blind alleys to that child.

In "The Middle Ages comes between antiquity and posterity," the only idea that young writer had of "antiquity" was that it was very far in the past; and the only idea of "posterity" that it was very far in the future. The "Middle Ages" were somewhere within that vast gulf of time. To these specimens Mark Twain adds a set of definitions, evidently euphonic:

*Amenable,* anything that is mean.
*Assiduity,* state of being an acid.
*Auriferous,* pertaining to an orifice. (We can see incidentally how that pupil pronounced *"orifice."*)
*Ammonia,* the food of the gods (evidently *ambrosia*).
*Parasite,* a kind of umbrella.
*Plagiarist,* a writer of plays.
*Sibilant,* the state of being idiotic (probably by association with *"silly"*).
*Mendacious,* what can be mended.

See what idea such definers would get if a pastor should speak of being "amenable to justice," or "working with assiduity"; if he should dwell upon the unworthiness of "living as a parasite," or refer to some story as a "mendacious narrative." Then we are informed that: "Ireland is called the Emigrant Isle, because it is so beautiful and green." It would be of no use to talk to that boy about "emeralds" or "emerald green."

It is related that an English clergyman was taken to task by a brother minister for "preaching over the heads of the people" by using difficult words. "What word did I use yesterday," he inquired, "that would not be understood by everybody?" "Well, for one thing, you spoke of felicity, when you should have said happi-

ness." "Everybody knows what felicity means," was the answer. "Very well," said the critic, "we will try it on the first man we meet." The first man was a farmer. "Can you tell me, my friend," asked the clergyman, "what felicity is?" "Well," replied the farmer, thoughtfully, "I know it's something inside of a pig, but I can't tell exactly what." The English farmer has American compeers. The lecture containing this anecdote was taken in shorthand by a reporter in one of our leading cities, and when the typewritten transcript came to me, the word *felicity*, each time it occurred, was spelled "phillisity." The very joke was lost upon the man who reported it.

On another occasion I dictated to a seemingly intelligent young lady stenographer a letter on the importance of accuracy, and when her beautiful typewritten sheets were handed me, I found the key-word, wherever it occurred, given as "accerisy." Unquestionably many a public speaker loses his audience, and many an author his readers, for want of knowing how difficult many words may be to them, which seem to him simple and easy. How a scholarly man may fail to attain simplicity when earnestly seeking it, is amusingly shown in the following statement which appears in the preface of William James's "Talks to Teachers on Psychology":

> "I have found by experience that what my hearers seem least to relish is analytical technicality, and what they most care for is concrete practical application. So I have gradually weeded out the former and left the latter unreduced; and now, that I have at last written out the lectures, they contain a minimum of what is deemed 'scientific' in psychology, and are practical and popular in the extreme."

Here the professor is trying his utmost to use "practical and popular" language, and believes that he has

done so. Yet in his very announcement of this purpose he speaks of "minimum" "analytical technicality" and "concrete practical application" among which the average reader would be hopelessly lost. It should be noted, indeed, that he was speaking to teachers, who would not find these words so difficult; but it seems quite evident that he really thought the whole utterance severely simple. Hence, Archbishop Whately, in his "Elements of Rhetoric," gives the following wise caution:

"Universally, indeed, an unpracticed writer is apt to be misled by his own knowledge of his own meaning into supposing those expressions clearly intelligible which are so to himself, but which may not be so to readers whose thoughts are not in the same train. And hence it is that some do not write or speak with so much perspicuity on a subject which has long been very familiar to them, as on one which they understand, indeed, but with which they are less intimately acquainted, and in which their knowledge has been more recently acquired. In the former case, it is a matter of some difficulty to keep in mind the necessity of carefully and copiously explaining principles which by long habit have come to assume in their minds the appearance of self-evident truths. Utterly incorrect, therefore, is Blair's notion that obscurity of style necessarily springs from indistinctness of conception. A little conversation on nautical affairs with sailors or on agriculture with farmers, would soon have undeceived him."

One who would "communicate" thought must be able to think from the hearer's or reader's side, and to express his thought in words that the hearer or reader will readily understand. So it has been many times found in colleges that an eminent scholar is a failure in the attempt to teach the younger students. He has so long ceased to be aware of their difficulties and perplexities that he cannot even imagine what they are, while some young tutor, just out of college himself, can

appreciate them all, and lead the immature minds better than the great man who has passed entirely out of sympathy with them. Over and over in a thousand ways the demonstration is reiterated that he who would influence men must know men.

On the other hand, a very scholarly speaker or writer may fail by using words so remote from common speech as not to be understood without painful effort. Thus a very learned writer on English grammar, in attempting to explain whether or not the superlative may be used of two objects;—whether, for instance, we shall say, "This is the best of the two"—quotes Shakespeare as writing "the best half," and Thackeray as saying, "her mother seemed the youngest of the two," and then adds this illuminating comment:

"However natural and usual the comparative is in such cases, the superlative is not absurd, in which the duality is disregarded, and the object attributively determined is denoted as affected with the quality in the highest degree in the class, which is treated as numerically indifferent." *

Do you get any definite idea of the meaning of that sentence at first reading? Do you get any clear idea at second reading? Do you not have still to flounder with "duality disregarded," "object attributively determined," "affected with the quality," and "treated as numerically indifferent?" What the writer meant to say was: "The superlative indicates an object as at the head of its class or group. But two objects may constitute a class or group, and one of the two may be thought of as surpassing all else in that class or group, without any reference to the number of objects included, whether two or more than two; and thus we may properly say

* Maetzner: "English Grammar," Vol. iii, p. 285.

'the best of the two'." That statement, I take it, anyone can understand.

Technical Language. Some of the books give as a primary rule, "Avoid technical language." But, if you are addressing a technical audience, technical language is the very most intelligible that can be employed. *Tort*, for instance, has for the lawyer a definite meaning, which is somewhat diffused and scattered in the phrase, "a civil or private injury." So everywhere among technical workers, the established terms of their science, art, or craft are more definite, more concise and more readily comprehensible than any popular equivalents that can be found for them. A lawyer addressing the Supreme Court will be perspicuous by using the most recondite legal terms, if he but uses each word in its exact legal sense; he will be more perspicuous than by the use of popular language, because each of those legal terms has one, and but one, definite meaning. Each such term is ordinarily briefer and more compact than any popular equivalent, and so enables the mind to move more swiftly and surely to a conclusion. But that same counsel in addressing a jury drawn from among the "plain people" will take pains to speak in common and popular language, and if obliged to use a technical legal term, will carefully define and explain it in the forms of common speech.

In addressing readers or hearers of a distinctly literary or scholarly type, literary and scholarly terms are best. More can be packed into those terms, and more effectively, than into any words of common speech. Such speaking or writing has a high and worthy place, but in every case its field is limited. Let us take, now, some examples of readily comprehended utterance. We start with that downright saying of Dr. Johnson: "Being in

a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned." No man ever had to read that statement twice in order to know what it meant. We understand it without a second thought; the remarkable thing is that the old Doctor contrived to give, not only his opinion, but his feeling about seafaring, in those few blunt, rugged words. A very different opinion and feeling is stated more elegantly in the quotations that follow:

"There the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound."
—SHELLEY: "The Revolt of Islam."

"A life on the ocean wave!
A home on the rolling deep;
Where the scattered waters rave,
And the winds their revels keep!"
—EPES SARGENT.

"O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our hearts as boundless, and our souls as free,
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire and behold our home."
—BYRON: "The Corsair," Can. i, St. 1.

Here every word is simple, while the very swell and surge of the ocean are in the stirring lines. Out of thirty-four words, there is not one of more than two syllables, while twenty-eight are monosyllables. Elegance, rhythm, splendor are not barriers to perspicuity. Let us now consider a miscellaneous group that are at once perspicuous, vigorous, and effective:

"God grants liberty only to those who love it, and are always ready to defend it."
—DANIEL WEBSTER: Speech, June 3, 1834.

"Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy."—EMERSON: "Social Aims."

"Let us have faith that Right makes Might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."—ABRAHAM LINCOLN: Address, New York City, Feb. 21, 1859.

Equal clearness may be attained in more extended statements. Thus:

"I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind."—BACON: "Of Atheism."

"He that seeketh to be eminent among able men hath a great task, but that is ever good for the public."
—BACON: "Of Ambition."

"Nature is often hidden, sometimes overcome, seldom extinguished."—BACON: "Of Nature in Men."

"To be conscious that you are ignorant is a great step to knowledge."—BENJ. DISRAELI: "Sybil," Bk. i, Ch. 5.

"There is no knowledge that is not power."
—EMERSON: "Society and Solitude," "Old Age."

"Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won."—DUKE OF WELLINGTON: Despatch, 1815.

"There is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides."—MILL: "On Liberty."

"The reward of one duty is the power to fulfil another."
—GEORGE ELIOT: "Daniel Deronda," Bk. vi, Ch. 46.

"The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all."—*Proverbs* xxii, 2.

"Character is higher than intellect. . . . A great soul will be strong to live, as well as to think."
—EMERSON: "The American Scholar."

"It never frightened a Puritan when you bade him stand still and listen to the speech of God. His closet and his church were full of the reverberations of the awful, gracious, beautiful voice for which he listened."
—PHILLIPS BROOKS' Sermons: "The Seriousness of Life"

Greatness of thought is no bar to perspicuity, nor is beauty of expression a hindrance. We may apply to style what Hare, in "Guesses at Truth," said of truth and manhood: "The greatest truths are the simplest: and so are the greatest men."

These quotations are from authors in poetry and in prose, covering numerous departments of English literature, but all characterized by instant intelligibility. What one element is the same in all? The answer is, the use of words which are understandable by the average reader without a pause of thought.

The predominance of short words—monosyllables or dissyllables—has been noted in a number of these quotations, and will be found to characterize them all. This shortness of words is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon, and analysis will show that the words in the selections above given are predominantly Anglo-Saxon. Hence, some have given as a rule for perspicuity, use Anglo-Saxon words. But this rule, while founded on a sound distinction, is practically useless, because few persons can tell what words are Anglo-Saxon, without looking them up one by one in the dictionary. Such etymological work is prohibitive; it would destroy all freedom and naturalness in speech or writing, and would make any extended composition impossible. Most persons, if suddenly asked, would say that *air, face, form, part, sense,* and *sound* are "good old Anglo-Saxon words." But "air" is from the Greek and all the others from the Latin. Words of this type are very numerous.

The following nouns, adjectives, and verbs belong to the Latin:—(Nouns) *age, art, cap, case, cent, chance, cost, crust, face, fact, faulty, form, ink, line, mile, minute, noise, noon, page, pain, pair, pane, part, peace, pen, piece, point, pound, price, rule, second, sense, soil, sound,*

*ton, tone,* and *vail;* (Adjectives) *able, apt, chief, clear, common, cross, crude, easy, feeble, firm, frail, gentle, grand, grave, human, just, large, lazy, mere, nice, pale, plain, poor, pure, rare, rich, round, safe, scarce, several, simple, square, sure, vain, vast,* and *various;* (Verbs) *add, aid, aim, arm, bate, bet, boil, cure, charge, class, close, cook, doubt, fail, fix, fry, judge, mix, move, pass, pay, pelt, save, serve, sort, strain, stray, study, train, try, turn,* and *use.**

This list might be greatly extended. Thus we might add *account, air, amount, carry, cell, channel, count, fade, fatal, fate, fence, money, number, polite, proper, property, quantity, report, scarce, story, sum, term, test, vacant, verb,* and numerous other familiar words, derived from the Latin (in many cases through the French).

These words have all the ear-marks of the Anglo-Saxon. They are short, strong, easy to utter and remember; they deal with well-known matters, or acts of common life, and in use are familiar to the majority of people. Every child knows the meaning of *air, cap, carry, cent, count, easy, modest, money, more, polite, poor, rich, save, sense, story.* Every person who has had even a little schooling knows all those above given.

Why, then, are not these words just as good as the Anglo-Saxon? The answer is that they are. There is nothing sacred in etymology. It is an interesting and valuable study, but is not to be a limitation upon the movement and freedom of language. The Anglo-Saxons and the early Englishmen, when they adopted a word from another language, smashed the shell of etymology, and shaped that word to the type of their own speech.

* Brainerd Kellogg: "Text-Book on Rhetoric," p. 291.

What they took over, they also made over. All trace of their origin lost, such words were molded to the Anglo-Saxon type. It is our best way to use them for what they are, with no curious desire to know whence they came. We may be confident that words of the Anglo-Saxon type will be always and everywhere intelligible among English-speaking people. They are the words of house, hearth, and home, of field, farm, and garden, of the shop and the camp and the forest and the sea—words that can be understood always and everywhere without a pause of thought. Hence the rule is simple. To reach all sorts and conditions of human beings, young and old, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, men, women and children, *use the words of common life.*

The quotations already given show how wide is the scope and how high the reach of such words when fittingly combined. It is wonderful what loftiness of thought, what depth of feeling may be so expressed.

The art of speaking to children is chiefly dependent on skilful choice of words. The words they use are chiefly monosyllables, or other short words denoting common objects or simple thoughts and feelings. Some speakers go off into an unintelligible discourse by using learned words for little people. On one occasion a speaker, in addressing a company of children, had occasion to use the word *epitome*, and then said: "It may be, children, that some of you do not know what *epitome* means. Well, children, an *epitome* is a *compendium,* and *compendium* is synonymous with *synopsis.*" On the other hand, certain speakers try to be so simple that they talk for babies and give the children petty ideas which they despise. The child regards such talk as an insult to his intelligence, and says: "Does he think we

don't know *that?*'' Then you have lost the child's attention by losing his respect.

The fact is, that children do a startling amount of deep thinking on the most tremendous themes. They are restrained by no conventionalities, they reduce everything to the concrete, and they expect a definite and final explanation of every problem. Hence, the rule for addressing children is, use plain and simple words. Then you may give the most lofty and beautiful thought you can attain, and often be taxed to keep up with their quick, fearless intellects.

Whoever will do this, will make another discovery, namely: that when he really interests the children, he holds the grown people without an effort. The most scholarly part of the audience will listen with delight if the thoughts, as well as the words, are worthy of the children. We have not grown so far away from them as we are wont to imagine.

Incidentally it will be found exceedingly difficult to hide pompous nonsense or ingenious sophistry in words that children can readily understand.

Yet, in choosing the common, avoid the commonplace. Words are quite sure to carry some flavor of their original use. Some never cease to be prosaic, some coarse and rude, and can have place only when necessity compels. A discriminating good taste is especially necessary in the use of the plain, simple, common words, because they are so very direct and downright that if they are feeble or rude, they are so without disguise. But just because of this directness, it will generally be found that a lofty, noble, or worthy thought will attract to itself plain words fitted for its expression, while an unfit word will so jar on the consciousness as to be instinctively rejected. Wordsworth's error in his early poems

when he thought to make poetry "simple" by writing about idiots, beggars, donkeys, and washtubs, was in the choice, not of words, but of subjects which could not be made poetic.

Let no one suppose that in order to win or influence children or "the plain, ordinary people," he must descend to their habitual mode of speech. The power of understanding language is always in advance of the power of using it. The little child, with not twenty words in his vocabulary, understands a large part of what father or mother says to him. Every great oration or poem is followed with delight by persons who could not have constructed a sentence of it. We have all an ideal of utterance far beyond what we attain. Nobler or fairer words and phrases lie quiescent in our minds, not near enough to our ordinary needs, not vivid enough in association, to be often called into action. But when some master of language brings them fittingly before us as the investiture of some worthy or lofty thought, we recognize them joyfully. He is a benefactor who can give life and breath to our dim ideals, and make them real on the earth for us. In one who can express even our own very thoughts better than we could utter them we recognize an element of leadership and mastery.

Hence to reach those addressed, let the speaker or writer give them, not the words they would ordinarily use, but the best words they are able to comprehend. Such language will be not less, but more intelligible, for the effort to follow that better diction is intellectual stimulus, and the aroused attention will grasp the thought so uttered with an ease and readiness which sluggish indifference could never attain. Go before your hearers or readers, but not so far before as to be out of touch with them, causing them to lose their guide. Go

far enough in advance to be their leader, but not so far that they cannot follow.

There is not only a range of words but a world of thought not within the cognizance of children, and its expression demands words that are not in their vocabulary. There is a larger, loftier, and more varied life than is lived by the mass of men, and words beyond their ordinary use are needed for its expression. The world has long since outgrown the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. Those substantial old words give meaning in solid blocks, where modern thought needs fine discriminations. The advance of science, invention, and mechanism has brought in wholly new objects and relations for which we need words that the Old English stock can not supply. It has become the habit of our language to draw these added words directly from the Latin or Greek, or from those classic tongues through the French,—occasionally from other languages. A multitude of such words have become so at home in English that we do not think of them as out of the ordinary. Every housewife has *preserves* in her pantry, and the signs on every ferry-boat direct our attention to life-*preservers*. Business has its *contracts* and *specifications*, government its *statutes, ordinances, regulations*, and *penalties*. *Education, morality, ethics, religion, philosophy*, and *science*, all derive their names from the classic tongues. It is noticeable that the very adjectives we use to describe the words we most readily understand, as *common, easy, familiar, ordinary, plain, simple, usual*, and the word *clear* itself, are all from the Latin.

One who will study the masterpieces of our literature, —those that win, delight, impress the ordinary mind, while at the same time they captivate and enthrall the scholar,—the immortal utterances which the world will

not let die,—will find that they have met this double need by a wise and skilful intermingling of the words of common life with those that are out of the ordinary, delicate, dignified, musical, resonant, lofty, noble, exalted. These are deftly sandwiched in, just where they will have the fullest effect of beauty or power, and in their setting are instantly all at home. At each point where one of these choicer words occurs, we could substitute no other,—wish for no other. Beauty, force, dignity, sublimity, are joined with highest perspicuity.

See how perfect is the mosaic in Gray's renowned poem. In the following survey we have run through the essential part of the poem, italicizing all the words derived from the Latin, Greek, or French, and leaving unmarked the Anglo-Saxon words, and, also, those from the Danish, Norse, or kindred tongues which found their way into English at so early a date that they may be classed as native English words.

We may end the examination with the twenty-third stanza, for there the poem really ends. The poet had then exhausted his inspiration and written all he had to write. The added portion, with its sickly description of the melancholy swain and the studied affectations of the "Epitaph," is an afterthought to finish a poem that was already done. They bring in the artificiality of his age, which he had avoided, when, in the essential part of the poem, he simply followed the thoughts and feeling of a broad-minded, thoughtful, tender-hearted man.

I

The *curfew* tolls the knell of *parting* day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Here the very first prominent word is of Old-French derivation,—*curfew*. Yet the word was familiar enough in Gray's time not to seem remote or repellent, while the Anglo-Saxon word *toll* carries the note of the bell in its very sound, and who ever thinks of *parting* as from the Latin? The two closing lines of the stanza are all Anglo-Saxon, and in the word "plod" you hear the heavy tramp of the tired man, as he walks homeward, "plod—plod—plod."

II

Now *fades* the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the *air* a *solemn* stillness holds,
*Save* where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the *distant* folds.

The Anglo-Saxon word "glimmering" is expressive of the hour. The "landscape" is perceptible in the twilight, but indistinct in the slight tremor of the evening air. The Anglo-Saxon word "landscape" is perfectly at home with the Old-French *fade*, as the "landscape" *fades*. The Greek *air* and the Latin *solemn* fit readily with the Anglo-Saxon "stillness" and "sight." In the third line the introductory *save*, from the French, is a trifle bookish, but fits well with the elevated style of the poem, while the Latin *distant* does not seem strange or foreign, but joins naturally with the "droning flight" of the "beetle" and the "drowsy tinklings" of the "folds."

III

*Save* that from yonder ivy-*mantled tower*
The moping owl does to the moon *complain*
Of such as, wand'ring near her *secret* bower,
*Molest* her *ancient solitary reign*.

The Latin *mantled* has become so thoroughly naturalized that it can be compounded with a pure Anglo-Saxon word in *ivy-mantled,* while the *tower,* originally from the Latin *turris,* has become so completely a part of the language, that no one thinks of it as a foreign derivative. The Anglo-Saxon *moping owl, wandering,* and *bower* harmonize completely with the Latin and Latin-French *complain, secret,* and *molest.* In the closing line every word except the pronoun is from the Latin, either directly or through the French, but what a special dignity these more scholarly words lend to the line—"*Molest* her *ancient solitary reign.*"

IV

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mold'ring heap,
Each in his narrow *cell* forever laid,
The *rude* Forefathers of the *hamlet* sleep.

A stanza of almost pure Anglo-Saxon, where the Latin *cell* and *rude* seem as Anglo-Saxon as the rest. The word *hamlet,* directly from the Old-French, is ultimately from the Old-Friesian, a speech closely akin to the Anglo-Saxon.

V

The *breezy* call of *incense*-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill *clarion,* or the *echoing* horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

The Latin Old-French *clarion* seems somewhat far from familiar life; but perhaps there is its very charm in connection with the familiar *cock* and *shrill.* "The cock's shrill *clarion*" is more poetic than "the cock's shrill *crowing*" would be, and the apt metaphor ele-

vates that familiar note with a touch of pleasant surprise. The *echoing*, from the far-off Greek, combines perfectly with the plain Anglo-Saxon *horn*. How perfectly the deftly fitted words bring the whole scene before us! We seem almost to inhale the very air of that "incense-breathing morn," and respond to its "breezy call," as the "echoing horn" of hunters riding by answers the familiar sounds of awakening nature.

It is impossible here to trace further the items, stanza by stanza and word by word, though anyone who will follow out such analysis will find himself well repaid.

VI

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife *ply* her evening care;
No children run to lisp their *sire's return*,
Or climb his knees the *envied* kiss to share.

VII

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn *glebe* has broke;
How *jocund* did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their *sturdy* stroke!

VIII

Let not *Ambition mock* their *useful toil*,
Their homely *joys*, and *destiny obscure;*
Nor *Grandeur* hear, with a *disdainful* smile,
The short and *simple annals* of the poor.

IX

The boast of *heraldry*, the *pomp* of *power*,
And all that *beauty*, all that wealth e'er gave,
*Await* alike th' *inevitable hour:*—
The paths of *glory* lead but to the grave.

X

Nor you, ye Proud, *impute* to these the *fault,*
If *Mem'ry* o'er their tomb no *trophies* raise,
Where through the long-drawn *aisle* and fretted ***vault***
The *pealing anthem* swells the *note* of *praise.*

XI

Can *storied urn* or *animated bust*
Back to its *mansion* call the fleeting breath?
Can *Honor's voice provoke* the *silent* dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull, cold ear of Death?

Let us take up stanzas IX-XI, which seem most replete with words of foreign derivation. Here the access of classic and less familiar words fits the movement of thought. *Heraldry, pomp,* the *pealing anthem,* the *storied urn* and *animated bust* seem to bring before us the stately scene of solemn procession down cathedral aisles, as some honored leader is laid to glorious rest. The less familiar words fit the majestic scene, which is out of the ordinary and above the common. Yet mark how completely the French *beauty* chimes with the Anglo-Saxon *wealth;* how the word of native English stock is at home amid its high surroundings. The longest Latin derivative, *inevitable,* comes in simply and naturally; its smoothly flowing syllables fit the poetic measure, while the word has in itself a loftiness and dignity which bring the whole line up to match the solemn majesty of death—"the INEVITABLE hour."

But the final line of stanza XI is entirely Anglo-Saxon, yet matches perfectly with all the preceding, and follows without shock or jar:

"Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull, cold ear of Death."

We pass on:

XII

Perhaps in this *neglected* spot is laid
Some heart once *pregnant* with *celestial* fire;
Hands that the rod of *empire* might have swayed,
Or waked to *ecstasy* the living *lyre.*

XIII

But Knowledge to their eyes her *ample page,*
Rich with the *spoils* of time, did ne'er *unroll;*
Chill *Penury repressed* their *noble rage,*
And froze the *genial current* of the soul.

XIV

Full many a *gem* of *purest ray serene*
The dark unfathomed *caves* of *ocean* bear;
Full many a *flower* is born to blush unseen,
And *waste* its sweetness on the *desert air.*

XV

Some *village* Hampden, that with *dauntless* breast
The little *tyrant* of his fields withstood;
Some *mute, inglorious* Milton here may *rest,*
Some Cromwell guiltless of his *country's* blood.

XVI

Th' *applause* of list'ning *senates* to *command,*
The threats of *pain* and *ruin* to *despise,*
To scatter *plenty* o'er a smiling land,
And read their *history* in a *nation's* eyes,

XVII

Their lot forbade; nor *circumscribed* alone
Their growing *virtues,* but their *crimes confined;*
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a *throne,*
And shut the gates of *mercy* on mankind,

XVIII

The struggling pangs of *conscious* truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of *ingenuous* shame,
Or heap the shrine of *Luxury* and Pride
With *incense* kindled at the *Muse's flame.*

XIX

Far from the madding crowd's *ignoble* strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to *stray;*
Along the cool *sequestered vale* of life
They kept the *noiseless tenor* of their way.

XX

Yet ev'n these bones from *insult* to *protect*
Some *frail memorial* still *erected* nigh,
With uncouth rimes and shapeless *sculpture* decked,
*Implores* the *passing tribute* of a sigh.

XXI

Their name, their years, spelt by th' *unlettered Muse,*
The *place* of *fame* and *elegy supply;*
And many a holy *text* around she strews,
That teach the *rustic moralist* to die.

XXII

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This *pleasing anxious* being e'er *resigned,*
Left the warm *precincts* of the *cheerful* day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

XXIII

On some fond breast the *parting* soul relies,
Some *pious* drops the *closing* eye *requires;*
Ev'n from the *tomb* the *voice* of *Nature cries,*
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

In these closing stanzas (XXII-XXIII) the same effect above noticed is to be observed. Each closing line is all in the native speech:

"Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind;"

. . . . . .

"Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires."

Yet the harmony with the preceding lines of each stanza is still perfect. We doubt whether the poet, finished scholar though he was, consciously thought of etymologies as he wrote. We believe, rather, that he took at each moment the word which then seemed most appropriate, and which best suited his artistic, poetic sense.

Such a study shows the profound unity which the variously derived words of the English language have achieved through the usage of centuries. It shows, also, that the effect of clearness produced by words depends, not upon the place from which they come, but upon the place which they have made for themselves among the harmoniously blended elements of our language. Far beyond etymological research, perspicuity, as well as beauty and power, is to be found in the accepted usage of words and their appropriateness to place and context in the connection which the speaker or writer assigns them.

## CHAPTER XIV

## CLEARNESS OF STYLE—III

### BY THE MASTERY OF SENTENCE-CONSTRUCTION

Construction is literally a "building together." Rhetorically, it is the building together of words into coherent statements: first, in sentences; then in paragraphs; and finally in an entire composition.

There is a sentence-structure so perfect, that every word helps to the understanding of every other, strengthening, explaining, or illuminating; and there is a sentence-structure in which every word seems to be in the way of every other, so that the hearer or reader makes his way as over loose building materials, stumbling, slipping, and struggling on, hindered at every step by that which, if properly constructed, would afford shelter, comfort, and beauty. The ill-heaped material may be of choice wood or costly stone, perhaps richly carved, but its lack of structure makes it but a rubbish-heap. Take, for instance, the following anecdote:

"An English professor, traveling through the Kentucky hills, noted various quaint expressions. For instance, after a long ride, he sought provisions at a mountain hut. "Madam," said the professor, "can we get corn bread here? We'd like to buy some of you." "Co'n bread?" replied the dame. "Why, if co'n bread is all yo' want, come right in; for that's jest what I hain't got nuthin' else on hand but."

Here, the words, though rude, are perfectly intelligible, but are so strangely pitched together, as to compel the

mind to struggle for the meaning, which fewer words would have made absolutely clear,—"for that's all I have on hand." Or, consider a specimen of a very different type,—an announcement posted at a popular summer resort:

"Inattention or incivility of attendants, if notified, the proprietor will be pleased."

In this statement the words are of a high quality,—more than ordinarily excellent,—but the effect is confusing. We know what is meant, but in a confused and cloudy manner. Perspicuity, "see-through-it-ive-ness," is lacking. We see the idea, as we sometimes see a shape through a pane of cathedral glass, when we may know that it is a human figure, and may even be able to judge whether it is that of man or woman, while no features nor outlines are distinctly perceptible. In the case of such a sentence, we must mentally translate the sentence, before we are fully in possession of the meaning:—

"The proprietor will consider it a favor to be notified of any inattention or incivility of attendants."

Ah, yes! All is at once evident. The words are nearly the same, but the construction is now coherent. The following statute is said to have been proposed in the legislature of Arkansas:

"When two trains, coming from different directions, approach any crossing in this state, both shall come to a full stop, and neither shall proceed, until the other has passed by."

This construction has the fault of undue compression. The writer has telescoped two sentences, with the odd result, that his meaning is discernible, while his statement is impossible. He simply needed a few more words to fill out his scheme:

"—— ——, both shall come to a full stop, after which the one having the right of way shall proceed, while the other shall wait until the first has passed by."

Observe that here, also, the words are all excellent, and there is a suggestion of legal precision and exactness; but all is precipitated into chaos just when we wait for the conclusion, and the trains are left forever stalled upon a contradiction in terms.

A reporter in the *New York Herald,* of August 5, 1915, undertook the difficult assignment of reporting a meeting in Trinity Church, which had been understood to be one of prayer for the success of the Allies, when, of course, strict neutrality required that equally fervent prayers should be offered at the same time for the success of the Germans. Here is the reporter's solution:

"The church was thronged when the assistant rector began the noon-day service. Several delegations of British societies marched in, and took seats. The service followed the usual order. If prayers were offered for the success of the Allies, as reported, *they were done so privately.*"

Of course, prayers that were "done so" would be unobjectionable.

Rhetorical is closely connected with grammatical construction, but the rhetorical always transcends the grammatical. A statement may be rhetorically preposterous, while grammatically faultless, as in the case of that attributed to Mr. Bonar Law in the House of Commons:

"Sir, the government has fallen into the habit of letting things drift, until they run against a precipice, which brings them to a stand."

Grammatically this statement is correct, but rhetorically its conjunction of ideas is astounding. For, the only fault of a precipice is, that one does not "run against" it, and that there is nothing to "bring (one) to a stand." If something only would, the unfortunate wayfarer might avoid going over. When this statement was received with roars of laughter, Mr. Law is said to have remarked that "he was aware that he had expressed himself badly, but he thought the House would understand him." This is an illuminating remark. For, one of the most prolific causes of non-perspicuous utterance is just this confidence that hearers or readers, from their antecedent knowledge, will extract a meaning, which the language employed does not convey. But from truly perspicuous language it is never necessary to disentangle the meaning. It lies before the mind as a landscape before the eye in the clear light of sun or moon. It is only necessary to open the eyes and see. To secure such clearness, certain requirements are absolutely indispensable.

1. The subject must stand out, manifest and inescapable, as the chief thing to be considered. For the grammatical subject, it is enough, if it but exists, and is in right relation with the predicate verb. Then the sentence is grammatical. But the rhetorical subject,—the subject of discourse,—must fix and hold the attention beyond a peradventure. This subject should appear clearly at the outset. If limitations and negations must come in, they should be held clearly subordinate to the main theme, and at times that theme may need to be restated, in order to regain its due prominence. Thus a lawyer might have occasion to say, "We charge that this act is a *felony,* not under the common law, but under an express statute, which supersedes the common

law; not under the laws of Pennsylvania, but of New York; not to be determined by ancient precedents, but by the law enacted by the legislature of the State of New York in the year 1915, which provides——." Then the recital of the law brings back his subject, *felony*. So in all cases, the point to be made, the main subject of discourse in the immediate connection, must stand clearly evident, as the one thing the hearer or reader cannot miss, overlook, nor forget.

This rhetorical subject may, or may not, coincide with the grammatical subject. Where the two are identical there is a special clearness in the construction, as in the opening of Bacon's "Essay on Learning:"

"*Learning* taketh away the wildness, barbarism, and fierceness of men's minds."

You may approve or criticise that statement. You may, perhaps, consider it a half-truth, misleading in its result. But you have not an instant's doubt what it means. You do not have to read it twice. It is perspicuous to the utmost. So is the following, from Charles Sumner's oration on "The True Grandeur of Nations:"

"The true *greatness of nations* is in those qualities which constitute the greatness of the individual."

But such identity of the rhetorical with the grammatical subject is not a matter to worry about. The rhetorical subject may stand out in effective prominence, when it is a subordinate element of the grammatical construction. Thus in the famed sentence from Richard Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity:"

"Of *law* there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world.

All things in heaven or earth do her homage,—the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power."

The word "law", here, is grammatically the object of a preposition, but it takes instant command of the whole construction, because everything else that is said is gathered around and related to the one great thought which that word expresses. Sometimes, by inversion, the rhetorical subject may be swept to the very end of a sentence, as part of the grammatical predicate. It is the rhetorical subject still. This will be seen in the extract following, from Kant's "Critique of Practical Reason," which, though a translation, is clear and vigorous still:

"Two things there are, which, the oftener and the more steadfastly we consider them, fill the mind with an ever new, an ever-increasing admiration and reverence:—the *starry heavens* above, the *moral law* within."

This requirement of making the subject stand out may be enforced by certain negative corollaries:

(1) Do not bury the subject. Some authors, often supposed to be profound, have a trick of hiding a subject in a sentence or paragraph so that it is unapproachable from either end. Archbishop Whately in his "Elements of Rhetoric" quotes such a sentence:

"It is not without a degree of patient attention and persevering diligence, greater than the generality are willing to bestow, though not greater than the subject deserves, that the habit can be acquired of examining and judging of our own conduct with the same accuracy and impartiality as that of another."

This sentence is so bad that it is not worth the space required to show completely how bad it is. We may

note a few items. You must pass twenty-eight words before you touch the subject, and then you get but a piece of it,—"habit." Then the verb "can be acquired" comes in to stave you off from learning what the "habit" is, that is so difficult to acquire. At last that appears, but so broken up by limitations of "examining" and "judging," "accuracy" and "impartiality," that the mind infallibly goes off on a sidetrack, and "finds no end, in wandering mazes lost." The Archbishop labors valiantly to reconstruct the sentence, and does make some improvement, but it remains ugly when all is done. Still it requires "a degree of patient attention and persevering diligence greater than the generality are willing to bestow," to find out what it means. Therefore "the generality" will not try.

There is nothing to do with such a sentence, but to smash it. Break it up into parts, and the mind may be able to attend to them separately. What the author of the sentence wants to say is:

"The *habit* of examining our own conduct as accurately as that of another, and judging of it as impartially, is difficult to acquire. It can only be attained by patient attention and persevering diligence. But the result is worth the endeavor."

Broken up into three sentences, with a total of forty-one words, the statement is comprehensible, as it was not in the one sentence of fifty-two words. But we have left out some qualifications and limitations! Yes, and perhaps it would have been well to leave out more. Few speakers or writers, who attain results, carry many of those things along. We can spare that rap at the general public,—"the generality"—for instance, for the sake of having that general public get clearly what we do say. Then, that modifying clause, "though not

greater than the subject deserves," which was at once embarrassing and feeble, as originally sandwiched in, becomes effective, when set off by contrast, as a concluding thought,—"But the result is worth the endeavor." There is, then, a reason for trying to do this hard thing.

Whenever a writer finds himself wound up in a cumbrous and clumsy sentence, which he cannot disentangle, let him do what Alexander did,—cut the knot. Then he can separate the ends. Start the sentence anew. Shake yourself free from the form in which you have originally cast your sentence. A writer's own words often become to him a yoke of bondage. Ask yourself, "Just what do I really want to say?" Then say just that, in any way you can, and you will probably find that you have blundered into the very best way. What is transparently clear to you is likely to be so to other people. If you have dropped any modifiers or limiting clauses in this process, do not let that disturb you. Those you address would have dropped them, if you had not, and probably much else along with them. The faculty of obliteration possessed by readers and audiences must always be reckoned with. You cannot give people more than they can understand, nor more than they will take the trouble to understand. If any of the eliminated matter is really important to your subject, you can see that when it is outside the mass, and give it such separate place as it may be worth. But most of the provisos in intricate discourses and disquisitions are as unimportant as kid gloves to a railroad engineer. In all speech and writing the chief question must be, Is the sentence or paragraph carrying the subject on to its destination?

(2) Do not change the subject needlessly or heedlessly. There is a natural and legitimate change of sub-

ject, as in narration or description, which conduces to freedom and variety. But there is a wanton and purposeless change of subject that springs simply from lack of definiteness in the speaker's or writer's thought. Various ideas are adrift in his mind, and he picks them up by whichever end is handiest, and pitches them into the receptacle of his sentence, leaving the hearer or reader to arrange them into such mental order as he can.

"The ship reached her port in safety, but two days had elapsed beyond the time when her arrival had been expected, as there had been violent storms, and the sea had been very rough, so that progress was difficult, and a crowd of my friends met me at the dock."

This sentence is almost as difficult as the voyage it describes, and the reception of the narrator by "a crowd of friends" comes in at the end with a suddenness to make one gasp. We had read of "the ship," but had no idea that he was on board. Six subjects,—*ship, days, arrival, storm, sea, progress,*—had successively claimed our attention, and when he at last appears, it is not as a subject, but as an object, whom the "crowd of friends" have come to see. Subsidiary topics have been brought into prominence, with the effect of distracting attention from one to another in succession. All the lines are discontinuous, so that there is no clear image.

As regards the choice of subject, the author should train himself to ask, from time to time, "Just what do I most wish to speak of here?" That, once decided, should be the main subject of that sentence or paragraph, to which all else should be subsidiary. In the example just given, the chief consideration is the experience of the returned traveler, which,—as he is him-

self telling the story,—will naturally be in the first person:

"I arrived safely, though two days late, after a rough and stormy voyage, and was met at the dock by a crowd of friends."

Following a single subject, the mind grasps the entire meaning without conscious effort. Against such confused construction as above instanced, set the following sentence, in which transparent clearness is attained:

"The good writer says all that he means to say, says no more than he means to say, and says all exactly as he means to say it."

Here the "good writer" is at the front from first to last, and we follow his characteristics with ease and pleasure.

(3) Do not confuse the subject by following an adjunct, as in the sentence, "The entire expanse of the extensive grounds were illuminated by electric light." What is wrong about that? the novice may ask. "The *grounds* WERE illuminated." Yes, but we were speaking of the *expanse*. Of what extremes this sort of error is capable may be seen in the following clipping from a daily paper published at the capital of the United States:

"The deliberations ended, *each member* of the party, which numbered twenty, stationed *himself* at different parts of the stream, and began to form a narrowing circle."

Here the reporter evidently left "each member," and was going on with "the party" as his subject. But he did not quite have the courage of his inaccuracy. If he had gone bravely on, and said "stationed themselves," that would not, indeed, have been grammatical, but it

would have been intelligible. Better still, he might have foreseen his need of a divisible subject, and said at the outset "the members of the party." Then he could have added "stationed themselves," etc., with both grammatical and rhetorical consistency. Somehow the indispensable prerequisite of a clear subject must be met and adhered to.

This is equally true of the simplest anecdote, the lightest and most playful description, and the highest flights of poetry and oratory. Take, for instance, the description of Ichabod Crane's steed, in Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow:"

"The animal he bestrode was a broken-down plow-horse, that had outlived almost everything but his viciousness. He was gaunt and shagged, with a ewe-neck, and a head like a hammer; his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burrs; one eye had lost its pupil, and was glaring and spectral, but the other had the gleam of a genuine devil in it. Still, he must have had fire and mettle in his day, if we may judge by his name, which was Gunpowder."

All the varied particulars unite to make one vivid, comic picture. Every touch brings out more clearly the one theme of the paragraph, the delineation of that quaint old horse, till we see him as if he had passed our own door. Now turn to Tennyson's solemn "In Memoriam," and read his description of the rise of a great man from humble life to the heights of power:

As some divinely gifted MAN,
Whose life in low estate began,
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known,
And lives to clutch the golden keys,
To mould a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope,
The pillar of a people's hope,
The center of a world's desire.

Through all that one "man" is at the forefront of thought. The prolonged description of his career is clear and easy to follow, because the one subject is never confused, nor lost sight of.

2. The predicate must stand out:—not necessarily the predicate verb, which may be a mere "copula" or link of construction; but the essential thing said or "predicated" about the subject, and answering to the subject. If the verb itself is the vital answer to the subject, that is well. Thus:

"The Lord preserveth all them that love him; but all the wicked will he *destroy*."

You do not have to read back, or to think back, to learn the fate of the righteous or of the wicked. There it is before your eyes.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath *done marvelous things:* his right hand and his holy arm *hath gotten him the victory*."

Here the prominence is given to subordinate elements of the predicate, "a new song," "marvelous things," "victory;" but how the passage sings and triumphs!

(1) There must always be a predicate verb.—Many ill-instructed persons will write a series of words like the following:

"Having at last been compelled to relinquish the attempt on account of numerous obstacles and difficulties and much opposition."

Such a writer is not aware that he has not made a sentence. Why not? There are words enough; there is recital of important items; there is a period. Yes, there is everything except a verb. The mind has no resting-place. That "having been," with all the ensuing words, stands only as a participial phrase, introductory to an expected conclusion,—and there is no conclusion. The accumulated words, without a verb, fail to express a complete thought. With a verb, we might have a sentence, as if the narrator had said, "Having at last been compelled to relinquish the attempt, etc., *I went home.*" There we have completed action.

(2) The predicate verb should not be isolated, unless it is by itself of supreme importance. In the following verse of the fourth Psalm, we have, in the Authorized English Version, both constructions:

"I will both lay me down in peace, and *sleep;* for thou, Lord, only makest me *to dwell in safety.*"

At the end of the first clause, the verb, "sleep," may well stand alone, for it expresses the crowning act of a trustful soul, even in the midst of perils. He dares to "sleep." But in the second clause, the verb "dwell" is not by itself important. A certain paraphrase renders this, "—makest me in safety to dwell." By such rendering the meaning is obscured. To dwell is not such a great thing. It is the condition in which one dwells that is of consequence. This the Authorized Version brings out by carrying the modifier, and not the verb, to the emphatic place at the end of the sentence,— "— to dwell in safety." That is the thing to be desired.

The treatment of the predicates constitutes one of many grounds of criticism upon the subjoined utterance of Henry James in his essay on "The Question of Our Speech:"

"But the term I here apply brings me to my second answer to your three or four postulated challenges—the question of what I mean by speaking badly. I might reply to you, very synthetically, that I mean by speaking badly, speaking as millions and millions of supposedly educated, supposedly civilized persons—that is the point—of both sexes, in our great country, habitually, persistently, imperturbably, and I think for the most part all unwittingly, speak; that form of satisfaction to you being good enough—isn't it?—to cover much of the ground."

Here are twenty-nine words, some of them long and difficult, between the subject, "millions," and the verb, "speak," and we are sorry for that poor little predicate verb, when it limps in alone at the end of the procession, and are fain to ask, Why does this appear, and where did it come from? for we had forgotten that any predicate verb was ever to be needed.

(3) The predicate should stop.—We all know talkers of whom no one can tell when they have finished. It is impossible to interject a remark, because their every statement has an appendix in continuous sequence. It was the fortune of the present author to hear an address by a society lady of this type. Repeatedly she approached a peroration, but at the very crowning moment a new suggestion attached itself, and she was off once more. Suddenly she burst out, "Well, the only way I can stop is to sit down,"—which she accordingly did, to her own great relief, and that of her audience. The relation of many a speaker or writer to his sentence is that of a rider to a runaway horse. He can neither

stop nor get off. He needs the curb-bit of a period. Let him settle decisively what is the legitimate end of that sentence, and stop there. If he should chance to have another idea, it will always be possible to construct another sentence. If the idea is worth adding, it is worth a sentence of its own. Here is to be noted the vicious fault of the "trailing clause,"—that is, a clause grammatically attached to the end of a sentence, with which it is not connected except grammatically.

"He (Tillotson) was exceedingly beloved, both by King William and Queen Mary, who nominated Dr. Tennison, Bishop of London, to succeed him."

The first thought suggested is, that however much the king and queen loved the good man, they very promptly and readily filled his place.

Sometimes a similar effect is wrought, not by a distinct clause, but by a descriptive phrase. An instance of this occurs in a work, of which the style is, in general, remarkable for excellence:

"The instruments of this revolt are likely to be found among the exasperated poor; but the provocation to revolt is likely to proceed from the unemployed and self-indulgent rich, spenders of that which others have gained, the persons of whom Mr. Ruskin has said that their wealth should be called their *ill-th,* because it is not well, but ill with their souls."

This sentence should have ended with "the unemployed and self-indulgent rich." The descriptive portion that follows has the effect, not only of letting the thought gradually down, but also of diverting it, until the added phrase has obscured the principal statement. The sharpness of contrast between the "exasperated poor" and the "self-indulgent rich" has disappeared.

The power of which the predicate, when well handled, is capable may be seen in the following passages from the grand Elizabethan English * of our Authorized Version of the Scriptures; where in sentence after sentence the predicate carries the wealth of thought, so that some of them may be said to be almost all predicate:

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say;

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us;

"Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us;

"Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul;

"Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

"Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.

"Our soul is escaped, as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers, the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

"Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?"

. . . . . .

"It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."—*Is.* xl, 12, 22.

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* Our Authorized Version unfortunately bears the name of King James I: but, as it was begun in the second year after he came to the throne, and finished in the eighth, even the royal authority could provide no scholars or translators, except those trained and ripened under Elizabeth's reign.

Here the subjects are unimportant pronouns; it is the successive predicates that bring out the fulness and majesty of the divine power.

### Long and Short Sentences

Apart from the subject and predicate, as making up the sentence, there are questions of the form of the sentence as a whole, that deserve to be considered in relation to perspicuity. Long and short sentences are relative terms, of no definitely established meaning.

"The average English sentence nowadays is said to contain about thirty words; any sentence over fifty words would probably be called long, any sentence under twenty words would be termed short. Moreover, if a writer habitually used sentences averaging over fifty words, his sentences would be conspicuous for their length; if an average of twenty, the reverse would be true." *

The long sentence may be as perspicuous as the short, but there is always danger that it will not be. The unskilled author may lose his way in it, and the most skilful may lose the clear sense of relation and connection, as the later words in long succession draw away his own attention from the earlier. This is a cause of faults of style that is often overlooked. Then, too, there are always many hearers or readers unable to follow a long sentence, however perfectly constructed, so as to grasp the entire meaning from start to finish. Hence, the orator or author most adept with the long sentence will often do well to divide it, that the average reader or hearer may the better catch his meaning. It is to be added that a series of long sentences is tiresome, and weariness is fatal to perspicuity. The drowsy watcher may fail to see what is clearly before him. Never

* Brewster: "English Composition and Style," p. 228.

deaden interest, if you would be sure of being understood.

Those skilled in addressing children commonly use short sentences, as well as simple words, showing that the short sentence is, as a rule, easier to understand. Yet an unbroken series of short sentences becomes difficult to follow. On the ground of taste, such a series is censured as having a "choppy" effect. But on the ground of perspicuity, its fault is, that the connection is dimmed by the incessant breaks at the sentence-ends, which hinder the mind from gaining a complete idea of the whole.

Hence, all authorities are agreed that the best effect is produced by alternation and interchange of long and short sentences, where the pleasing variety keeps attention alert, neither strained too continuously, nor interrupted too often. Where longer sentences have led up to a conclusion, a sudden summary of that conclusion in one short sentence is often very effective; and conversely, where items have been accumulated by a series of short sentences, great power is often attained by gathering the result of all into one longer concluding sentence. Judgment, taste, and study of the best literary models are needed to enable one to combine variety and unity, so as to win, not only beauty, vividness, and force, but the height of perspicuity. A fine example of such felicitous combination appears in the closing paragraph of Lincoln's "First Inaugural Address:"

"I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection. The mystic cords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when

again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

While the division of sentences into "long" or "short" is mechanical, the division into "loose" or "periodic" is structural. The loose sentence sets forth some leading thought up to the point where the sentence might readily end. Then a new thought is added by a new clause, and perhaps another and another, all either limiting or completing the effect of the leading clause, until the statement is measurably complete. These added features are not liable to the criticism passed upon the misconnected "trailing clause." They really add to the effect of the original statement, with which they are closely and vitally connected. It is so that we express ourselves in ordinary conversation and offhand writing, following the natural advance and association of thought from point to point. Hence a loose sentence, when well constructed—perhaps with painstaking care—tends to an appearance of naturalness and ease. Addison is, in English literature, the supreme artist of the loose sentence, weaving together clause after clause in a succession always graceful and pleasing, sometimes lightly touching the fashions or follies of the passing day, yet often embodying great intrinsic power, half-veiled by seeming ease, as a masterly athlete smilingly performs some difficult feat with no appearance of exertion. In more recent times, Irving attained much of this skill in lighter literature, while Lincoln carried it into those orations and state papers marked by combination of power of thought with felicity of expression, which have won him immortal renown. A fine specimen of Addison's more serious style may be quoted here:

"I was yesterday about sunset walking in the open fields, till the night insensibly fell upon me. I at first amused myself with all the richness and variety of colors which appeared in the western part of heaven; in proportion as they faded away and went out, several stars and planets appeared one after another, until the whole firmament was in a glow. The blueness of the æther was exceedingly heightened and enlivened by the season of the year, and by the rays of all those luminaries that passed through it. The galaxy appeared in its most beautiful white. To complete the scene, the full moon rose at length in that clouded majesty which Milton takes notice of, and opened to the eye a new picture of nature, which was more finely shaded, and disposed among softer lights, than that which the sun had before discovered to us.

"As I was surveying the moon walking in her brightness, and taking her progress among the constellations, a thought rose in me which I believe very often perplexes and disturbs men of serious and contemplative natures. David himself fell into it in that reflection, 'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou regardest him?'"

—"Spectator," No. 565.

Thus Addison, under the guise of a casual description of an evening walk, introduces his serious paper on "The Omniscience and Omnipresence of the Deity," which would not have been read by the men and women to whom it was addressed, if it had begun in solemn metaphysical or theological style. The periodic sentence, on the other hand, distributes as deftly as may be along its course, all modifiers and clauses of limitation or emphasis, and, then, at the very last, brings in the essential statement of the predicate as at once the closing and the concluding thought. Thus:

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."—*Ps.* xc, 2.

The periodic sentence is never complete until the close. The mind is held in suspense,—perhaps eager suspense, —till the final words answer its waiting question—what then? Many of our greatest speakers and writers have loved the long, cumulative period, where successive thoughts are cunningly woven in through subordinate clauses, till one emphatic and masterful utterance rounds out all at the close. When a long sentence of this type is thus complete from start to finish, it embodies marvelous power. The thought has been unfolded item by item, till each has made its separate impression on the mind of hearer or reader; then all are bound together by one conclusion, which masses the accumulated impression of the whole, as the edge of the ax strikes with the impact of all the mass of steel behind it. A sentence of this type, if well constructed, will be for a vigorous and well-trained mind in the highest degree perspicuous.

But such combination of unity with clearness through an extended period is possible only for the speaker or writer of thorough training, sound judgment, and clearness of thought. Even he may be compelled to recognize that many hearers or readers will be unable to follow clearly to the end a long periodic sentence, and be fain for their sakes to break it up. The writer has more freedom in this respect than the orator, because readers, with the page before them, can turn back and reread the words until all is clear. Yet, even of this, all but readers of highly disciplined minds become impatient, if compelled to do it too often; so that the author capable of fashioning the sustained periodic sentence will do well to use it sparingly, making simpler sentences his staple, and reserving the stately periods for the strategic points. The inexperienced speaker or

writer may well beware of such constructions, in which he may even chance to lose his own way. He will do best to rely upon separate sentences of moderate length, each of which he is sure he can handle. Then, for cumulative power, let these be made to follow each other toward one conclusion, like rank after rank of a charging army.

Perhaps the supreme master of the long, cumulative periodic sentence, in the English language, is Edmund Burke. A fine example of unity with clearness maintained throughout such a sentence appears in his "Conciliation with America:"

"Such is steadfastly my opinion of the absolute necessity of keeping up the concord of the empire by a unity of spirit through a diversity of operations [here the mind can easily wait for the conclusion to tell what the 'such' means], that if I were sure the colonists had, on leaving this country, sealed a regular compact of servitude; that they had solemnly abjured all the rights of citizens; that they had made a vow to renounce all ideas of liberty for them and their posterity to all generations [here we are brought to a crowning point of expectancy, with the question rushing upon the mind. 'If all this, what then?' and the swift answer comes to the mind eagerly waiting for it], YET I should hold myself obliged to conform to the temper I found universally prevalent in my own day [not yet fully telling, but foreshadowing the conclusion, of which the waiting mind catches a premonition], and to govern two millions of men, impatient of servitude, ON THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM."

To that exalted "freedom" the whole sentence has been leading up. Precedents, practises, or statutes of compulsion amount to nothing. He has devised a case stronger than the advocates of tyranny could have imagined, of accepted and stipulated colonial servitude, and swept it aside with that defiant "yet", and so

moved on to the grandest and strongest concluding word, leaving last in the thought of every hearer or reader, to abide when all else has been said, lofty, enduring, triumphant, "the principles of freedom."

# CHAPTER XV

## CLEARNESS OF STYLE—IV

### BY ITEMS OF CONSTRUCTION

Various parts of speech deserve attention by and for themselves as related to perspicuity.

### I. Nouns

Nouns are the great basal blocks of which sentences and paragraphs are built. Of them it is perhaps enough to say that nouns should be used directly and squarely for what they mean. The homely and familiar rule to "call a spade a spade" is never outgrown nor outworn. It may at some time be convenient, in order to avoid repetition, to call the "spade" a "tool" or an "implement," but never so as to disguise the fact that it is a "spade." If the phrase "a garden implement" is so used as to leave the hearer or reader to guess whether a hoe, shovel, rake, trowel, or a simple "spade" is meant, then such ambiguous phrase is inimical to perspicuity. Thus Blair says of Lord Shaftesbury:

> "If he has occasion to mention any person or author, he very rarely mentions him by his proper name. . . . He descants for two or three pages together upon Aristotle, without once naming him in any other way than 'the Master Critic,' the 'Mighty Genius and Judge of Art,' the 'Prince of Critics,' the 'Grand Master of Art,' and the 'Consummate Philologist.'"

So, Ruskin remarks that, during the famine in Ireland, certain clergymen of the Church of England preached upon the sufferings of the Irish people, but it

would never do to mention the "potato," much less the "potato rot;" so they spoke of the famine as caused by "the *failure of that esculent,* on which it has pleased Divine Providence that the sustenance of a large part of the human race should depend."

The choice of a noun for a certain purpose is often a matter of elegance, delicacy, fitness, or force, but always first and foremost of clearness. The question what noun to use may involve a skilful balancing of synonyms. In some description, for instance, the "grass," the "sod," or the "turf" may be equally clear and the choice among these words may depend upon the special turn of thought, the connection with other words, or, as in poetry, the harmony or melody of the passage; but whether we shall say the "field," the "lawn," or the "roadside," depends absolutely on the scene we are depicting, and no one of these latter words can be interchanged with either of the others. That the noun shall carry the exact meaning to be expressed is the demand of perspicuity; the choice among those that are equally clear is to be made for other reasons.

## II. Pronouns

Pronouns for careless writers are a very special snare. *He, him, his,* may refer to any male being whatever; *she, her, hers,* to any female; *it* and *its,* to any inanimate object or abstract noun, to a little child, or even to an entire clause or sentence. Hence, if there are in a sentence two or more nouns of the same gender, the reference of the pronoun may become very confusing. Thus in "Lisias promised his father never to abandon his friends," makes us ask, Whose friends? His own or his father's? "Mrs. Jones said to her daughter that perhaps *she* might go to the city for the zephyr *she*

needed to finish the cushion for *her* sister's Christmas present." We ask: Who "might go to the city?" Who needed the "zephyr?" Whose "sister" was to have the "present?" If a personal reminiscence may be allowed, the author might mention that he read the sentence above given to a very intelligent lady, who instantly answered, "That's perfectly clear; there's no trouble about that." To the questions, "Who might go to the city? Who needed the zephyr? etc.," she replied, "Why, *she.*" To the further question, "Which *she?*" the answer was, "Why, the one who is speaking." Thus it would appear that feminine intuition has a capacity of understanding such enigmatic utterances, to which the merely critical intellect cannot attain. But it may be a question whether misunderstandings, and even doubts of veracity, may not sometimes arise in the reporting of such conversations, where syntax is so shadowy a guide to sense. Dr. Blair quotes from Archbishop Tillotson the following almost hopeless sentence:

"Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others; and think that their reputation obscures them, and their commendable qualities stand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their virtues may not obscure them."

This can scarcely be made clear to oneself, even by rereading, and it was uttered in a sermon, where no rereading was possible. To avoid such confusion, there are four expedients:

1. Change the number of one of the antecedents. Then the reference of the singular and of the plural pronoun will become perfectly clear. Thus, in the sentence just quoted, substitute "another" for "others," when the sentence will read:

"Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in *another,* and think that *his* reputation obscures them, and *his* commendable qualities stand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over *him,* that the bright shining of *his* virtues may not obscure them."

2. Change the person of one of the antecedents by using direct, instead of indirect, quotation. Thus:

"Lisias promised his father, I will never abandon *your* friends,"—if that is the meaning; or, "*my* friends," if that is the intent.

"Mrs. Jones said to her daughter, 'Perhaps *I* may go to the city'," etc.,—if that is the meaning; or, " 'Perhaps *you* may go'," etc. In either case there will be no doubt of the meaning intended.

3. Repeat the noun, if there is danger of ambiguity. Thus, the following sentence is thoroughly ambiguous: "For the lad can not leave his father; for if *he* should leave *him, he* would die." Who would die? the lad, or his father? But take it as actually given in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures, in that moving plea of Judah for his younger brother, Benjamin, and the reference is perfectly plain:

"For the lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his *father,* his *father* would die."—*Gen.* xliv, 22.

Here, the threefold repetition of the noun is not offensive, because it removes every shadow of ambiguity, and the pleasure of absolute transparency causes that to be approved, which otherwise would be censured; for manifest utility is also an element of beauty.

4. Divide the Sentence.—The antecedent probability of clearness is always,—as stated in the preceding chapter,—in favor of two or more short sentences as against one long one. Often the division of the sentence is the

only way to get rid of a seemingly false reference of a pronoun. Sometimes the same purpose can be accomplished by a resumptive break within the sentence, bringing the antecedent out from a crowd of words, to stand alone as the one element to which the pronoun must refer. Thus:

"A good book gives a workingman something to think of besides the mere mechanical drudgery of his daily occupation, which he can enjoy while away from home, and look forward with pleasure to return to."

Is it his "daily occupation" or the "mechanical drudgery of" of it, "which he can enjoy while away from home?" We know it can not be either of those, and by reading or thinking back, we see that the antecedent of that "which" must be "something;" but that "something" is a long way off. If we are listening to a speaker, we shall probably lose his next sentence, while trying to recover that connection; and if we are reading a book, the recovery is still a hindrance and a vexation. Now, break that sentence, and bring the antecedent into obvious connection with its pronoun, and all is clear:

"A good book gives the workingman something to think of besides the mere mechanical drudgery of his daily occupation,—*something* which he can enjoy while he is away from home, and look forward with pleasure to return to."

How simple the device, yet how perfect the effect! The thought is clear on the instant. The idea has entered the mind by its own momentum. It is there, and we are free to go on to the next suggestion. The relative pronoun is an especial sinner in this respect. Dr. Blair quotes the following sentence from one of Bishop Sherlock's sermons:

"It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life by heaping up treasures, *which* nothing can protect us against but the good providence of our heavenly Father."

As if the good providence of our heavenly Father were to protect us against "treasures!" Again from Dean Swift:

"Many act so directly contrary to this method, that from a habit of saving time and paper, *which* they acquired at the University, they write in so diminutive a manner, that they can hardly read what they have written."

It was not, as would at first appear, "time and paper," *which* "they acquired at the University," but the "habit of saving." In connection with this it is well to bear in mind one important rule, which is almost without exception, namely: Do not make a relative clause dependent upon another relative clause. The result is almost sure to be confusion and obscurity. Thus:

"On my way to town I met a farmer, who was talking with a little girl, *who* carried a basket on her arm, *which* contained some eggs, *which* she was taking to her grandmother, *who* lived in a cottage, *which* was hidden from view by an orchard, *which* adjoined the road, *which* led to the town, *which* was founded in 1640 by settlers from England, *who* fled from the persecution of Archbishop Laud, *which* led to the Cromwellian conflict, *which*, etc."

And so we come with the deadly certainty of Mr. Dick's Memorial to "the head of Charles I," then we might append an epitome of the system of government of England and of the United States, and proceed, "*which* differs from that of China, *which*," etc.,—until that adventurous and persistent relative should have circumnavigated the world, "*which* is but a minor

planet of the solar system, *which,*"—here would come in the Copernican hypothesis, with a side-glance at the Ptolemaic theory, "*which* has been long since superseded by the sublime and ingenious system of Laplace, *which* embraces," and we have still before us all the immensity of space, with all that it contains, to be treated within the limits of our yet unfinished sentence.

The trouble with a certain class of writers is, that when they have once embarked upon a sentence, they feel that there will never be a chance for another. That sentence stands to them, like Mrs. Partington's definition of "order," as "a place for everything and everything in it." Somehow, all that their minds for the time contain must be marshaled within the confines of that ill-fated sentence, and they are seeking for connectives, while the real object of their quest should be a period. There are limits to the human capacity, whether of exposition or of apprehension, so that, after a moderate number of particulars have been given, one may be very sure that, if a new thought is worth adding, it is worth a separate sentence. If it is not worth a separate sentence, drop it.

One of the very smallest of the pronouns contains deadliest possibilities. The little word *it,* already referred to as an introductory particle on page 177, may refer to any inanimate object whatsoever or to any abstract idea; *it* may be used impersonally, as in the expressions, "*it* is cold," "*it* rains," "*it* is likely," etc.; or *it* may refer to an entire preceding statement; as, "Do you intend to buy that lot for the college?" "I intend to do *it* at once;"—where the antecedent of *it* is not the *lot* or the *college,* but the act specified in the question. Hence, *it,* if carelessly used, may become a most fruitful source of error. Take the following incoherent note:

"I lost my knife in the garden, and *it* is so large, and so full of weeds, that I have gone all through *it* without finding *it,* and may have stepped over *it* without knowing *it. It* is nearly dark now, and I must leave *it,* and *it* is likely to rain before I can go out into *it* in the morning, though I intend to do *it* as soon as *it* is light enough to see *it,* if *it* is anywhere in *it.*"

For a less flagrant example, consider the following:

"The French wits have, for this last age, been wholly turned to the refinement of their style and language, and, indeed, with such success that *it* can hardly be equaled, and runs equally through their verse and their prose."

Here are four nouns, to either of which the "it" may refer. Does the author mean that the "success" "can hardly be equaled." or the French "language" or "style," or the "refinement" of either or both? As we read on, we see that it must be the "refinement," since *it* "runs equally through their verse and their prose." We at last understand the meaning, but there is a lack of perspicuity in the style which requires so much rereading and analysis to make it intelligible. A minor fault in the use of *it* consists in employing the pronoun at the end of a sentence to denote some definite thing, and then beginning the next sentence with an impersonal *it,* which simply denotes a relation.

"There is another matter so important, that we must give some attention to *it. It is incomprehensible* that it has so often been overlooked."

Our first thought is, Why should we be required to give attention to *it,* if *it* is incomprehensible? Ah, but you must read the whole sentence. Then you will perceive that it is not the "matter," but the fact "that it has been so long overlooked," that is "incomprehensible." Yes, and just for this reason the sentence fails

of perspicuity, because it is necessary to check one's first impression, and hold the meaning in suspense for correction by the result of later reading. If a statement is profound, more may be discovered beneath the surface, but on the surface it must mean something intelligible. Even paradox gains its power from the clearness with which the false meaning is first presented impelling the mind to reach out for the true.

There are few more important rules for clearness and precision than to challenge every *it*, and make sure that an adequate reason can be given for the presence and position of that elusive pronoun. By habit a careful writer comes to do this instinctively, so that a misplaced *it* jars his sensibility like a false note in music; but the habit must be formed by painstaking care.

### III. Adjectives

These err most frequently by excess, either in quality or degree. There is a touch of the emotional about the adjective, so that it is readily used with an emphasis far beyond what the occasion warrants. The number of very ordinary objects that are "splendid," "sumptuous," "gorgeous," "magnificent,"—or "tremendous," "horrible," "dreadful," or "awful,"—passes computation. The effect of overemphasis is always belittling. In the recoil the mind discards too much. If one were to speak of a hero as appearing "in the gorgeous panoply of khaki uniform," the effect would be satirical; and we should see the grim plainness of the khaki as never before, by contrast with the fulsome description. But if one were to speak of him as "a grand figure in the simple khaki of the soldier," that uniform would gain a dignity from the fitness of the adjective that described it. An accumulation of many adjectives

produces a similar reversal of effect, as if we were to say:

"He was a wise, just, broad-minded, far-seeing, vigorous, inflexible, patriotic, mighty, true, noble, genuine statesman."

Here the word "statesman" is belittled before we reach it. We seem to come down upon it with a slump. The feeling is, when we come to the noun, Is that all? We have lost the substantive in the adjectives that were to exalt it. See how instantly the effect is changed, if we omit all the adjectives but one, and say, "He was a *true* statesman,"—"a *genuine* statesman,"—or "a *mighty* statesman." At once the noun becomes dominant,—"a *statesman*," "true" to all that name implies, —or "mighty" in the qualities that befit that great name. Thus, a young writer, when he has reluctantly cut out sonorous adjectives from a sentence, finds,—often to his great surprise, — that the sentence is stronger. He has given his nouns a chance.

This is a matter not merely of taste, strength, or force, but of clearness. Every deduction that the mind must make from the language used, in order to get the thought, involves some loss of perspicuity. Attention to minus signs makes multiplication more difficult. In the case of numerous adjectives, the scattering of attention dims the total effect. The light is refracted in so many directions that all clearness of outline is lost.

Hence the rule for the adjective is, that if it does not do good, it does harm. The young writer of any imaginative vividness can do no better thing than to go through his composition and strike out every adjective that can be spared. Then, those that he keeps for good reasons will be found at once effective and clear.

Another item to remember is, that the adjective has

a trick of fusing with its noun into one composite idea. If we say "a spirited white horse" we do not mean a horse that has the two qualities of being "spirited" and of being "white," but a "white horse" that has the quality of being "spirited." Hence, the grammars will tell you that you need no comma between "spirited" and "white," because no connective is understood. The "spirited" does not modify the noun "horse" alone, but the composite idea expressed by adjective and noun in "white horse." Such mental combination of adjective and noun may easily produce confusion. A following pronoun may seem to refer to the noun as modified by the adjective, when the real reference is to the noun alone.

"The intellectual qualities of the youth were superior to *those* of his raiment."

What were the "intellectual qualities" of "his raiment?" For such a case, the best rule is, Separate the adjective from the noun, that the reference to the noun may be unmistakable; and this is ordinarily best done by converting the adjective itself into a noun. Instead of "the *intellectual qualities* of the youth," say, "the *qualities* of the youth's *intellect;*" then the reference runs smoothly,—"were superior to *those* of his *raiment.*"

In the old days of "wild-cat" banking, Dan Rice, the famous showman, sent to Harper & Brothers a twenty-dollar bill, which proved to be spurious, and which they returned with a note saying, "This bill is counterfeit. Send us another." After some months his answer came as follows:

"Gentlemen:—Pardon delay. Counterfeit 20's on the ————————bank are becoming very scarce, but I have at last obtained another, which I send herewith, as you request."

Sometimes such confusion is best avoided by repeating the principal noun, sometimes by complete change of phrase, as, in this last instance, "Send us a good one."

It may be mentioned in connection with this matter that English is intolerant of phrases other than adjectives inserted between an article and its noun; as, "*the* never to be sufficiently lamented and only very recently clearly comprehended *disaster,*"—or similar constructions sometimes imported from the German. English, with its genius for freedom and simplicity, objects to waiting for its noun until explanatory and limiting clauses are dynamited from its path. It would rather have a try at them separately, after the thing immediately in hand has been clearly disposed of on its own merits, saying, for instance: "*The disaster,* which can never be sufficiently lamented, and which has only very recently been clearly comprehended."

## IV. Verbs

Of verbs, as of nouns, the chief thing to say is that they should be used directly and squarely for what they mean. The occasional difficulty in the agreement of a verb with its subject is to be solved by the rules of grammar. The choice of one verb in preference to another is something that the speaker or writer must determine on each occasion by his own sense of good usage or by reference to the dictionary or to a book of synonyms. Take, for instance, the following little list of synonyms:

*Decline, descend, droop, drop, fail, faint, fall, lapse, set, sink, subside.*

It would be easy to accumulate passages in each of which some one of these verbs would be preferable to any other that could be chosen from the list. The rea-

son in each case would ordinarily be the same, that in that particular connection, the verb chosen meant most exactly what the speaker or writer wished then and there to express. Such choice will always be perspicuous—clear beyond all rules.

There is, however, one verbal form, the participle, which by misuse readily produces confusion of meaning. This happens when the participle is so used that it refers, or seems to refer, to the wrong noun: A very spirited and entertaining writer of a certain book of travels opens his account of a carriage-tour with the following explanatory statement:

"Not expecting us, the horses had been turned out to pasture, and were difficult to catch."

Evidently the horses should have been notified in advance. What is *said* here is that, as the horses did not expect us, they had been turned out to pasture; what is *meant* is that, as our friends did not expect us, the horses had been turned out to pasture. The participle, "expecting", in that sentence, can only agree with "horses;" it was meant to agree with a noun which the writer had in his mind, but did not write; hence he wrote nonsense. The sentence intended was:

"Our friends not expecting us, the horses had been turned out to pasture."

That would have been correct, though a trifle clumsy. It would have been better to change the construction and write: "As our friends were not expecting us," etc. A Washington paper brings us the following instance of confusion:

"Mr. ———— sustained fractures of both wrists, and his wife's arm was broken in two places, in addition to receiving a severe scalp-wound."

How the "right arm" could "receive a scalp-wound" passes comprehension. Evidently a new pronoun should have been supplied, with which the participle might agree, "*she* also receiving," etc. Here again it would be better to change the construction, writing, "and *she* also received," etc. In some way it must be indicated that it was the lady, and not the arm, that received the "scalp-wound." Over and over again, in analyzing errors, one is compelled to notice how many of them result from undue economy of words. Brevity must always yield to perspicuity.

## V. Adverbs

The danger of the adverb is its facility of adaptation. It may modify a verb, an adjective, another adverb,—yes, or even a noun, though the grammars are very shy of saying so. In the line, "*Not* a drum was heard, *not* a funeral note,"—etc., vainly do we try to attach that adverb to the verb. We have changed the whole statement if we say, "A drum was not heard." Was it sounded then? If the drum was not heard, what was heard? If not one drum, then how many? We flounder in our syntax until we honestly admit that the English language has no hesitation in attaching an adverb to a noun or pronoun, when it can so best deliver its meaning. A considerable list may be found of adverbs which readily take this construction. We have only to believe in our language, and raise our courage to its freedom.

Since the adverb has so many affinities, we can control it only by isolating it as far as possible from words with which we would not have it combine, and bringing it as close as possible to any word with which we wish

it to unite. Clearness in the use of this part of speech requires that every adverb be placed as near as possible to the word it is intended to modify, and kept as far as possible away from any word it is not to affect. If we say, "He is considered generally insane," we imply that he is insane most of the time, or in most of his mental activities; if we mean, as is probable, that the majority of people view him as mentally unbalanced, we shall express that best by saying, "He is generally considered insane." If one remarks, "This letter needs to be rewritten very badly," he has not expressed his meaning. The letter has probably been already written very badly, and nothing would be gained by having it rewritten in the same way. What the critic meant to say was, "This letter very badly needs to be rewritten."

Books of grammar and rhetoric give much space to the placing of *only,* and certain other adverbs and adverbial phrases, the misplacing of which may change the entire meaning of a sentence. These rules are worthy of careful study, and will be found of great value, where special precision is required. But it will be found that too minute observance of these precepts would often result in a wooden exactness of style that would seem pedantic. Public speaking may approach the freedom of conversation, where tone and emphasis are often a sufficient guide to the reference of such words, and the writer may trust much to the context and the reader's common sense. The use of the rules is to keep one away from dangerous shoals. Especial care must, however, be taken to avoid the possible double reference of an adverb, which may be sometimes ambiguous.

"The hope that war in the Balkans might be averted

*virtually* has been abandoned," said the *New York Herald*, in October, 1915. Was the war to be "*virtually* averted," or had the hope been "*virtually* abandoned"?

"We have endeavored to meet Mr. Sanders's questions, and through them many others of the same sort which are asked us fairly, coolly, and dispassionately," said the *New York Sun*, on Sept. 9, 1915. We give the punctuation of the original. It will be seen that there is nothing in the passage to indicate whether the questions are asked "fairly, coolly, and dispassionately," or whether the editor endeavors to meet them in that spirit. The entire editorial from which the passage is quoted would indicate that either or both might be true. But which was specifically intended? In neither of these instances just quoted is the blemish serious. But in the following, actually clipped from the "Pulpit Notices" of a prominent religious paper, the misplacement of an adverbial phrase becomes ludicrous: "The Rev. —— ——— is about to leave the congregation to which he has ministered for the past eighteen years *to their deep regret.*" Evidently the congregation were now to be congratulated.

## VI. Connectives

These are notably the Preposition and Conjunction. The importance of these parts of speech is greater in English than in most other languages, because the lack of inflection in our language makes more to depend on connecting particles. Among these connectives relative pronouns and relative or conjunctive adverbs, already mentioned, are to be considered. The proper handling of all these requires careful and extended study, and—beyond all study of particular words and phrases,—wide and attentive observation and reading. There is

what may be called constructive reading and listening, which follows speaker or author through spoken word or printed page, as if with the constant silent question, "How does he do it?" What makes that phrase so felicitous? Now one finds the answer in a skilfully placed preposition, conjunction, or other connective at just the right point; or, again, in the skilful avoidance of any connective which sets unrelated phrases in sharp distinction. What makes some other sentence harsh and jarring? Why, it is that misplaced, ill-chosen, or lacking connective, omitted when it should have been used, used when it should have been omitted, or when another connective would have better expressed the meaning.

This does not involve perpetual note-taking. That process, valuable as it is at times, would, in constant use, too much restrain range and speed. We need to hear many, very many good speakers, on the platform and in conversation, and to read numerous books worthy to be models; and to do this at all, it must be done with a certain rush. We must get what we can in the flitting moment. Besides, alertness is an end in itself. Vivid attention often sees more than laborious analysis. When in constant association with good models, one gains much by mere absorption, as good manners are formed by moving in good society. In a matter involving so many and such diversified items as the connectives of English speech, direct instruction must be chiefly effective by setting the observing, imitative, and inventive faculties vigorously at work. Notes when possible, alert observation always.

We are to avoid what Campbell has called "The obscure by defect,"—of which he gives one of his best examples under a different heading. He quotes from the "Spectator" the sentence:

"I have hopes that when Will confronts him, and all the ladies in whose behalf he engages him cast kind looks and wishes at their champion, he will have some chance."

On this he remarks:

"The first part of the sentence suggests that Will is to confront 'all the ladies,' but afterwards we find it necessary to construe this clause with the following verb. This confusion is removed at once by repeating the (connective) adverb 'when'; as, 'I have hopes that when Will confronts him, and when all the ladies . . . . cast kind looks, etc.'"

In the following sentence obscurity is produced by omission of the connecting relative, *that* or *which:*

"Ignorance, inefficiency, low standards, are to have the money high worth has attained showered upon them."
—The *New York Sun,* Sept. 4, 1915.

The average person will find it necessary to read that sentence twice, in order to get the meaning. The obscurity at once disappears by the insertion of one little connective pronoun:

"Ignorance, inefficiency, low standards, are to have the money that high worth has attained showered upon them."

In contrast with this lack of connectives, is to be noted their excess, which is wholly vicious as connecting things that should be separated:

"The many friends of Miss ———— will be glad to know that she is to accept a position at Pownal, *and will leave at once.*"—The *Portland Press.*

In all ordinary courtesy, the fact that the young lady "will leave at once" should be dissociated from the "gladness" of her friends.

"Poli's Palace will have a clever bill for the first three days of the week, and a complete change on Thursday."
—The *Springfield Republican.*

Evidently those interested in a "clever bill" should hasten to attend during the "first three days."

Errors such as these, though not always so glaring, proceed from that obsession previously adverted upon (pp. 336-7) of getting all that is to be said within the confines of one sentence before stopping to take breath. There is often no connection so good as disconnection. The ballad, the ode, and some forms of narrative often gain power by omitting incidents and neglecting intervals that the mind can spring across without a bridge of speech. This trait has often been remarked upon in the plays of Shakespeare, who does not tell us that Hamlet is visionary and irresolute, nor that Macbeth alone sees the ghost invisible to all about him. In Bayard Taylor's "Song of the Camp" this artistic disconnection is used with great effect:

They lay along the battery's side
Below the smoking cannon;
Brave hearts from Severn and from Clyde,
And from the banks of Shannon.

They sang of love and not of fame;
Forgot was Britain's glory;
Each heart recalled a different name,
But all sang "Annie Laurie."

Voice after voice caught up the song,
Until its tender passion
Rose like an anthem, rich and strong,—
Their battle-eve confession.

Dear girl, her name he dared not speak,
But, as the song grew louder,
Something upon the soldier's cheek
Washed off the stains of powder.

Beyond the darkening ocean burned
The bloody sunset's embers,
While the Crimean valleys learned
How English love remembers.

And once again a fire of hell
Rained on the Russian quarters,
With scream of shot and burst of shell,
And bellowing of the mortars!

And Irish Nora's eyes are dim
For a singer dumb and gory,
And English Mary mourns for him
Who sang of "Annie Laurie."

Before that last stanza, how sharp a break! Nothing is told of the assault, nor whether it resulted in victory or repulse. There is no list of casualties. We read the conclusion only in the tears and grief of loving hearts in the far islands beyond the sea. But who would wish to fill the blank? All that mind or heart calls for is told. We ask no prosaic particulars. The story, while not less clear, is far more effective for its well timed reticence.

In ancient building the entire space was filled with some solid material, as brick or stone, the mass being depended on to resist all varieties of strain and stress. Gradually men learned to leave out the surplus material, giving open spaces by column and arch; and in modern building the various lines of force are scientifically calculated, and only so much material is used as is necessary to resist pressure, stress, and thrust where it is known beforehand that they will fall, while all the rest of the structure is left open to the day. So a good style provides support for the advance of thought, wherever doubt or uncertainty or confusion might arise, while not encumbering itself with superfluous words or tedious explanations. A style in which well-chosen words are so built together is sure to be perspicuous.

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE ART OF BREVITY

There is a brevity measurable by the clock or by count of words, which may be called

### Mechanical Brevity

Such brevity is as definite and positive as the figures on the face of a check, and often as obligatory. If six speakers are to have ten minutes each in a meeting of one hour, no one speaker can take more than his ten minutes without defrauding another. Then technical, mechanical brevity is simple honesty. You have no right to increase your own time, or to appropriate the time of some one behind you. It may chance to be no small disappointment to some later speaker to be driven to present something he has much at heart to an exhausted audience chiefly desirous not to listen to another word on any subject. Simple commercial honesty has place on the platform as at the bank, and in the former case, as in the latter, will be found to be "the best policy," for each speaker shares in the success of the whole occasion. The writer faces a similar requirement under still more imperious rule.

Physical and mechanical necessities do largely control speaking and writing, however much we may resent the fact. For the speaker limited to a certain time, there are two chief rules:

1. Fix in mind what you surely want to say, if you

say nothing else,—the *sine qua non*,—and somehow get that said.

2. Fix in mind what you would like to say as the last word in the last minute, and watchfully save that minute, in which to say that thing.

For the writer the rules are practically the same, but with the advantage that he can go back over his work, and force place for the essential by omitting what can be better spared. The power of concentrating as one writes is of much value, and can be largely increased by training and self-discipline.

This, however, can be overdone. Many severely brief paragraphs give the reader an impression of forced condensation. He feels and winces at the tightening of the screws. Naturalness is absolutely squeezed out. No writer should keep himself continuously in a straight-jacket. But when one has written with freedom and naturalness, it is astonishing how much deliberate word-pruning can do. The first items to watch are adjectives and adverbs. You have spoken, it may be, of "a violent storm" or "a tremendous peal of thunder." But a "storm" is likely to be "violent," while a "peal of thunder" is quite sure to be "tremendous." You may dispense with those adjectives. Or you have said, "I was exceedingly astonished." But one who is astonished is always impressed "exceedingly." You can spare the adverb. Most of the "very's" can be relentlessly extirpated. You will be surprized at the gain in strength and effectiveness when the main columns are left without scaffolding. Introductory phrases are often needless. The saying, "There is nothing which so soon perverts the judgment," may be cut to "Nothing so soon perverts the judgment," and be better for the cutting. "There are many persons who deny this,"

is more forcible in the form, "Many persons deny this," or, briefer still, "Many deny this." Relative pronouns and relative clauses are objects of suspicion. Instead of "John Brown, who was their leader," write "John Brown, their leader," or "Their leader, John Brown." On the other hand, an extended phrase may often be reduced to an adverb. "At that particular instant of time" may be sufficiently accounted for by the adverb "then," or, perhaps, "just then." The habit of studying concise writings, such as Bacon's "Essays" or Lincoln's "Gettysburg Oration" or the best state papers of England and America, will show how such condensation may be made, and develop a taste for its concentrated power,—yes, and beauty, the beauty of Doric architecture, without a needless line to mar its aspect of grace combined with boundless strength.

It must be admitted, however, that oftentimes the difficulty of attaining mechanical brevity is not in performance, but in demand. A set of managers with no sense of humor desire simply to trot out the lions they have in captivity, that the audience may actually hear them roar. Then they rush them across the arena at such speed that they can not even roar in comfort.

We can not but think that our New England ancestors had a better method than ours, in those dark days, when, on their broad farms and in their spacious mansions, they lived that "restricted life," for which popular authors caged in New York apartment houses now pity them. Being without the elevating influence of "moving" pictures and the tango and vaudeville, and not having the rapid-transit facilities of our day, they were reduced to the necessity of listening for an entire evening to a single speaker, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Ward Beecher, Oliver Wendell Holmes, or Ed-

ward Everett, and occasionally devoting half a day to an oration of Daniel Webster. Then, in their homes, at the grocery and the post-office, across the farm fences, and along the roads, they would discuss the brilliant or mighty thoughts that each great man had elaborated in his lecture, comparing each successive orator with those who had gone before, and a university extension course was conducted all over New England. So the "long-headed Yankees" were evolved,—men capable of thinking, and of thinking things through. So, too, a school of orators was developed:—men who had time enough to present a thought in various lights, to sustain it by facts and arguments, to explain it by helpful illustrations, and to light it up by images of beauty. Those leaders of men could never have elaborated their high thoughts in such exquisitely chosen words under the whip and spur of snap-shot speeches, where the chief end of man is to get out of the way of the next man. We read now as "classics" the very lectures to which the men and women, the youths and maidens, of an earlier day listened with rapt attention in the Lowell Institute, in the plain old churches, the town halls, and the country schoolhouses.

Mechanical brevity has now become, with many persons, an obsession, and in our publications merit is measured by fractions of an inch. To-day speed is the first law of mental, as of social and commercial, activity. Literature is to be reduced to one dimension, and its excellence estimated in proportion to its shortness.

So we are developing a host of people who can think only in giblets. Their minds are impatient of any continuous process of thought, and move only by jerks of impulse and impression. They never really *know* any-

thing, but decide life's weightiest matters by transitory spurts of feeling. They do not want to be made to know anything, nor to think definitely about anything. That is "tiresome." Something of this tendency is doubtless due to the fifteen-minute or twenty-minute "periods" in our public schools, where a class is dismissed just at the moment when the subject might become interesting, and where any explanation, illustration, or enforcement of anything would "interfere with the schedule." Our salvation, as yet, is in the professions where minister, lawyer, and doctor have to study complicated problems till their heads ache; in our solid business men, engineers, architects, and financiers, compelled to wade through piled sheets of specifications, ponder every item, and then mass all together into a unity; in our colleges, where professors agonize to induce butterfly students to think, and succeed in evolving some intellectual processes in the minds of a certain per centage of them.

Every opinion worth having requires toil and time. Thinking takes time, and the expression of thought in writing or printing requires space. Let a dozen persons join hands in a circle, and transmit a pressure of the leader's right hand around the circle to his left hand again, and the time occupied is measurable by the watch, showing that each person has occupied an appreciable time in so simple a process as receiving a pressure by his right hand, and transmitting it by his left. Who that has ever done anything worth doing has not found himself compelled to spend minutes, hours, even years, to bring scattered items and observations to an orderly and definite conclusion? There are comprehensive truths that can not be grasped till one has mastered the preliminary truths of which they are

made up. Time and space must be given for the mind's advance, for most of our knowledge is composite, and is gained by assembling ideas previously known, so that by their association the mind is led to truth previously unknown, just as tourists along Alpine pathways zigzag up the face of some towering cliff, turning now this way, now that, but always ascending, till, step by step, they reach the summit.

Hence, Herbert Spencer errs in his otherwise admirable essay on "The Philosophy of Style" in making all the power of speaking or writing consist in "Economy of Attention." Valuable as that is, it is by no means all, nor even always the chief thing. There is a power of emphasis and of impression. There are times when what is needed is, not to economize, but to arouse, fix, focus attention—to secure, above all things, the "arrest of thought." The electric current that flows smoothly, without interruption, from positive to negative pole, does no work; it is when checked and restrained, compelled to fight its way, that it speaks through the telegraph key, drives the car, or blazes in the arc-light. There are thoughts on which the mind needs to pause, till by the very lingering the new idea is brought into touch with myriad associations,—with the memories of childhood, the loves and joys, the hopes and possibilities of the individual and of humanity,—while in the pause the mind itself has time to expand to the vastness and majesty of the truth. To effect just this is often the crowning triumph of the orator or the author,—and this, the craze for brevity would rush him by on an express train. Mechanical brevity must not be allowed to control that which is far more important than space or time. Then our thought must be, not of mechanical, but of

### Essential Brevity

1. Essential brevity is not a mere matter of time or space. It can not be measured by the clock, nor determined by count of words. One man will make a three-minute anecdote so tedious that the listener is reminded of a pressing engagement, while another will charm by an hour of story-telling. Webster occupied four hours in delivering his *Reply to Hayne,* and no man who heard it wished it to have been less. Essential brevity is saying just enough for the subject and the occasion, and no more. So considered, brevity is simply an apt fitting-in to the time system of the universe.

2. Essential brevity is not a mere unconsidered paucity of words. One who does not think clearly will make a communication brief by leaving out what it is highly important to say. A friend writes, "I will come at 7.40 to-morrow, and talk the matter over with you." Does he mean at 7.40 A. M., or 7.40 P. M? Is it the train leaving his station at 7.40, or the train reaching your station at that hour? There are three connecting roads; which of those is intended? You might desire to know, so as to meet him at the station on arrival. All these points might have been covered without making the note appreciably longer by writing as follows: "I will come by B. & O. train leaving here at 7.40 A. M. to-morrow, and talk the matter over with you." The advantage of the few added words is worth far more than the trouble of writing them. The number of telegrams over which the recipient puzzles in dumb amazement is appalling. And words beyond the original cost but two cents each. Brevity when it becomes confusing is not a virtue, but a vice. The good and safe rule is, Never sacrifice clearness or force for the sake of brevity.

When in doubt, be explicit. True brevity makes sure of saying that, the saying of which is the only object for speaking or writing. A perfect example of brief explicitness is a despatch from the English commander, Clive, to his native ally:

"Tell Meer Jaffier to fear nothing. I will join him with three thousand men who never turned their backs. Assure him that I will march day and night to his relief, and stand by him as long as I have a man left."

Everything is said:—that the commander will be there in person; the number of his force; their quality of tried and dauntless valor; his rapid march and unflinching steadfastness; and all in forty-two words, that stir the blood like a trumpet blast. No wonder that the man who could write that despatch could conquer India! True brevity can afford to be explicit in the essentials, and gains time and space for that by omitting non-essentials. To repeat: True brevity says that the saying of which is the only object for speaking. To turn now to the affirmative, it may be remarked that:

1. Brevity is Condensation. In college days at Harvard a cricket-ball had suffered from acquaintance with the bat, and two students had the curiosity to open it in their room. The ball proved to be stuffed with feathers, and it soon began to appear that a college room was not large enough to contain the feathers that had been compressed into that small sphere. A discourse that has been packed with thought under hydraulic pressure will always be found elastic and resilient, and will never seem long if in harmony with the limits of the occasion. The hearer gets the impression of brevity because he wants to pause to expand or meditate upon what the speaker is hurrying him by. After

such a discourse people will be saying, "If he had only carried that thought out a little further"—or, "He might have added this or that." Such condensation makes the suggestive style. The utterance is felt to be brief in proportion to what the speaker had to utter. Interest, as well as respect, always attends the manifestation of reserved power.

2. Brevity is Terseness of Expression,—care and skill in the choice and rejection of words, with a preference for the tense vigor of the Anglo-Saxon. The aim should be to make each sentence the most compact carrier of the thought that it can be made, and be at the same time effective and worthy of the thought.

3. Brevity is Progress.—It is advance with a purpose. The soul of humanity loves progress from the time when the growing boy announces himself as "going on ten or twelve," instead of stationary at nine or eleven. When each sentence or paragraph is a step onward, the hearer catches the glow of the forward movement, expectancy keeps time to the march of thought, and the very body of the listener leans forward, reaching toward that new land of truth to which the speaker is leading him on.

This process may be reversed with disastrous result. A preacher will give a good, strong sermon for fifteen or twenty minutes. Then one can see that he began gleaning his notes for every feeble thought which he had rejected when the enthusiasm of expression was strong upon him. Still, in his selection, he takes every time the best of the leavings, till finally the last reprobate item is thrust into the mouth of the audience as a finishing morsel. The preacher skims for his hearers a pint of rich cream, and then, that nothing may be lost, pours in the whole gallon of skim milk.

Mark Twain quotes Franklin's experience with Whitefield, when, as the philosopher listened to that prince of preachers pleading for a charity, he first resolved to give him all the copper he had in his purse in those days of specie. Soon he decided to give him all the silver, too. Then, at the conclusion, he threw copper, silver, and gold, purse and all into the collection. "I had," says Mark Twain, "the very opposite experience. I heard a preacher appealing for missions. When he had spoken ten minutes, I decided to give him all the money I had about me. He went on ten minutes longer, and I determined to give him half. He spoke another ten minutes, and I thought a quarter of my money would be enough. He went on ten minutes longer, and I made up my mind not to give him any. Then, he added a final appeal, and that so worked upon my feelings that I took a dime out of the collection-basket as soon as it came my way."

4. Again, brevity is Economy of Material in actual use. This does not conflict with what has been said of Condensation and Reserve Power. Many a speaker has the reserves without the power. All his reserves are crowding into the discourse. He can not give a truth without detailing the mental processes by which he reached it. If there is anything doubtful, he must impress on the hearers the hazy mystery or mistiness of his doubts. The effect is as if the contents of a bakery were shoveled upon one's breakfast table.

A merchant had spent a large sum in furnishing his drawing-room, but was dissatisfied with the result. He went to a leading furniture dealer, and asked him to find and correct the fault at any cost. The dealer said, "Let me go into that room alone." Soon he called the owner, who said with delight, "It's all right now. What

have you done?'' The artist in furnishing took him to a corner of the hall, and showed him three chairs which he had taken out, changing the parlor from a wareroom to a residential apartment. He had simply removed the excess of material. The crowding of thought must be behind the spoken word—never piled in front of it or around it.

The audience needs, not processes, but results, and just enough of these for effective use. Every scientist does a vast deal of what he calls ''dead work''—calculations and experiments that do not appear in his completed statement, and that are largely effective in telling him what not to say. There is precisely similar work for the writer or the public speaker to do, and it may be affirmed that the ''dead work'' of the study is the life of brevity in the spoken or written result. As where the Alps rise in morning majesty above a sea of cloud, the master of eloquence does not go down to follow miles of mule-tracks through mist and shadow, but carries his hearers from mountain top to mountain top on wings of light.

5. Brevity is Unity.—One paragraph aside from the main topic, or not seen to connect with it, brings the hearer to mental pause, so that he hears the watch ticking in his pocket.

An engineer may have good reasons for going upon a siding, but it is fearfully tedious for the passengers, and when the rhetorical engineer is also the train-despatcher, he is bound by all the laws of success to insure his audience a clear track ahead. The sidings should have both termini in the speaker's or writer's study. Deadliest of all enemies to apparent brevity is repetition, leading the hearer to exclaim, ''Oh, do we have to hear that all over again.'' What belongs to one head should be ex-

hausted there, and each fresh division should include all that belongs to the new topic, and rigorously exclude everything else. Divisions should never overlap, either in utterance or essence.

It is well to go through a discourse and ask of each topic or paragraph, "Does this help the main thought?" If not, that topic or paragraph or sentence is all too much for that place and time, and is destructive to the soul of brevity. Sometimes the apparent lack of unity will be found to be a mere fault of arrangement, so that simply transposing a paragraph will change it from a discordant note to a part of a complete harmony.

6. Brevity is Comprehensiveness—according to the derivation, the "grasping together" of the subject, so that the speaker or writer sees the whole at once and all parts in their relations.

Visitors to St. Peter's Church in Rome often find difficulty in appreciating its vastness because all is in such perfect adaptation. You go up to the infantile cherubs near the entrance, and find to your surprize that it takes your two hands to clasp one baby arm. You learn that in the apparently life-size picture of St. Luke at the base of the dome, the pen in the hand of the evangelist is seven feet long. Then you begin to feel the sweep of that comprehensive genius that reared the vast pile, and proportioned all the objects to the immensity.

Hence it will readily appear that brevity is an attainment—an achievement—the result of hard work, and of the exercise of some of the highest qualities of oratorical or rhetorical genius.

7. Brevity is the Right Finish.—Two young ministers were comparing notes. The first said, "I don't see how it is. My education is all as good as yours. In many ways, certainly, I have as much ability. My sermons

are no longer than yours, but I always leave an audience tired, while you leave them delighted and inspired."

"I will tell you," said his friend. "You put your best illustration into your introduction and your best arguments into the body of the sermon, and reach the closing part tired and hurried and glad to get through as you can, and your audience feels the same way.

"I write my conclusion first. I put the very best thing I have into it. I learn it by heart. Then, however I may stumble or forget, when the time comes, I fire that conclusion, and go off in a cloud of glory."

There is more in this than first appears. It is more than an oratorical trick. It involves oratorical perspective, seeing through the vista of the discourse the fitting close.

Conclusion is more than end or finish. It is by derivation, a "shutting together," bringing all to completeness, all that has been said leading up to this. The conclusion should be alive, vigorous, climactic, with the power of the whole discourse pressing behind it. Take the famous close of "Paradise Lost:"

> "The world was all before them where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
> They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way."

An inferior poet would have added some paragraphs to tell us about the scenery, the miles they walked, and where they got their dinner, in contrast with this majestic finish which bears in its plaintive cadence all that the poem set out to tell:

> "Of man's first disobedience . . .
> With loss of Eden till one greater Man
> Restore us and regain the blissful seat."

This simple close leaves the reader in a hush of musing expectancy.

The public speaker, especially, needs to watch against the insidious temptation, when the very climax and acme of oratorical triumph is reached, and the whole audience is in vivid sympathy at the crowning moment—that is so grand, so thrilling—just to add a few paragraphs to "improve the occasion," and lo! the occasion has vanished, like a sunset while the artist was vainly trying to fasten it down on canvas. Hence, the final and absolute rule of brevity is, At the conclusion S T O P !

## CHAPTER XVII

## FIGURES OF SPEECH

Figurative language is so far from being artificial that it is one of the most natural modes of expression of human thought. The first words of all languages must have been in some way connected with material and sensible objects, as *sun, moon, stars, earth, rocks, hills, trees, rivers, birds, beasts, men, women,* and *children;* the *voices* of men or animals, the *song* of birds, the *sighing* of the *wind,* the falling of *rain* or *snow,* the peal of the *thunder;* and with these such verbs of motion as *go, walk, run,* etc. Then, as words came to be needed to express abstract ideas and spiritual emotions, the natural way, and perhaps the only way, to obtain such words was by adapting some material term to spiritual import. Thus the very word for *spirit* or *soul* in both Latin and Greek is one that originally signified *wind* or *breath. Darkness,* always somewhat oppressive, was especially depressing to primeval man, when, through the long, unlighted nights, he "watched for the morning." It was therefore natural to use any word denoting absence of light or brightness as expressive of sorrow or sadness. The idea has come down to us through the ages. Thus Longfellow writes in the well-known lines:

"The day is cold, and *dark,* and dreary;

. . . . . .

"My life is cold, and *dark,* and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are *dark* and dreary."

With such association the words *dark, gloomy, somber, shadowy,* all suggest sorrow, grief, or melancholy. We speak of a sorrowing one as "walking in the *shadow,*" we speak of "the valley of the *shadow* of death," and we wear black in token of mourning.

Again, in matters of the intellect, ignorance and dulness make one fail and err, as *darkness* makes one stumble or wander; so Europe's centuries of ignorance are called the "*Dark* Ages." Spiritually, a *dark* deed is one that skulks and hides from exposing light.

But in another aspect, *shade* or *shadow* may suggest a wholly different idea. In tropical lands, nothing is so wasting and desolating as the heat of the sun, and there shadow becomes a symbol of rest and protection. The divine care is thus likened in the Scripture to "the *shadow* of a great rock in a weary land."

*Storm* is naturally an emblem of conflict. The elements seem to be contending. Accordingly, we have the expressions, "*warring* winds," the "*storm* of battle." A gathering mass of clouds suggests a thronging assembly, and we speak of a "*cloud* of witnesses."

Man invented a word to express the swift movement of a living creature, and said, "The horse, the deer, the dog, *runs.* Soon he extended the word to anything marked by the underlying conception of swift, continuous movement, and said, "The fire *runs* through the dry grass;" "the river *runs* to the sea." Next the word was extended to mental conceptions, as of thought and utterance. Our old law books speak of time "whereof the memory of man *runneth* not to the contrary." The Psalmist says, "God's word *runneth* very swiftly." The word *lapse,* from the Latin *lapsus,* a slipping, described the sliding movement of a stream, and men came to speak of the *lapse* of time; or, by more direct com-

parison, we say events are "borne down the *stream of time,*" or when a thought or fact has quietly passed out of mind, we speak of a "*lapse* of memory."

Thus early language was highly figurative, and if we study the origin or derivation of our words, they are found to be, almost all, at the root symbolic or pictorial. We have largely lost sight of these comparisons, and take our words, as we take our coins, at their current face value, without thinking of the minted gold or silver, or noting the emblem stamped upon them; but as we go back to observe the earlier meanings, we find all primitive language exceedingly picturesque. Hence, as Macaulay has pointed out, early ages are the most poetical:

"Language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state. Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence, the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilized people is poetical. . . . In a rude state of society men are children with a greater variety of ideas." *

Still, even in the most advanced society, every human being starts with a background of the physical and the concrete, which has been the basis of thought through all his childhood, and is inseparably united with what will always be its precious memories. Still, by the needs of food, clothing, and shelter, the alternations of heat and cold, storm and sunshine, the vicissitudes of sickness or health, bodily pleasure or pain, the needs of travel by land and sea, and at times of forcible defense against violence from within or without, the physical and concrete form the basis and enclosure of the highest intellectual and spiritual life. The tooth-ache is as

* "Essay on Milton."

real for the philosopher as for the savage. Hence images from the physical and material will always make ready appeal to human thought and feeling, and often aid effectively in the expression of the highest spiritual truths, as when the Scripture declares, "God is *light*, and in him is no *darkness* at all." Figurative style is thus not to be thought of as merely ornamental. Well-chosen figures of speech do supply ornament and beauty, which within due limits are worthy aims, but also, in their best use, add to the clearness, force, and effectiveness of what is said or written.

The chief figures given in books of Rhetoric are *simile, metaphor, antithesis, epigram, paradox, metonymy, synecdoche, interrogation, exclamation, apostrophe, personification, climax, hyperbole, irony. Allegory, parable,* and *fable* are added by many rhetoricians; but these are not properly figures of speech, but forms of literature, partaking of the nature of narrative.

These figures may be arranged in groups as follows:

1. Simile, Metaphor
2. Antithesis, Epigram, Paradox, Irony
3. Metonomy, Synecdoche
4. Interrogation, Exclamation
5. Personification, Apostrophe
6. Hyperbole, Climax

*Distinction between Simile and Metaphor.*

*Simile* and *metaphor* are both figures of comparison, and many persons have difficulty in distinguishing one from the other. The difference is the simplest possible. A comparison introduced by the use of some comparative word,—*as, like, such,* etc.,—is a *simile.* A com-

parison made without the use of a comparative word is a *metaphor*. If we say of a man, "He upholds the church *as a pillar* supports an edifice," we use a simile. But if we say, "He *is a pillar* of the church," that is a metaphor.

THE SIMILE.—Every simile is a comparison, but not every comparison is a simile. A rhetorical simile must involve the element of *imagination*. To secure this effect, the rule is absolute that: A simile must compare some object with another of a *different* class.

If we say that one city is like another city, we have, not a simile, but a direct comparison. To say, "A mule is like a horse, but with very long ears," is not simile, but description. For simile, the imaginative element must come in. Thus, when we speak of some vast bank of clouds as "like a city with spires and towers and palaces," we have a simile, because the imagination has built its city out of the airy shapes of cloudland.

But, though imaginative, the likeness must be real. Here, as in all good writing or speaking, truth is the supreme test of excellence. An illustration, however beautiful in itself, if it does not fit the case, leaves the reader or hearer with a sense of being defrauded by a comparison that does not compare.

The likeness must be intelligible, and readily intelligible, to those to whom it is addressed. The very first use of simile is for explication or explanation, to bring some thought clearly before the mind by an apt comparison. As used for explanation a simile should always explain the *less known* by the *better known*. Take, for instance, the Scriptural simile:

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the *Spirit*."

Here the *wind*, which everyone knows as powerful, though unseen, is used to explain the action of the divine Spirit, viewless yet mighty. But a simile, however rich and beautiful in and of itself, is useless for rhetorical purposes, if drawn from objects unfamiliar to the reader or hearer. He has made no advance. Nothing is clearer to him. In this respect, Browning is especially faulty. His admirers say, "How rich and beautiful that simile is!"—after they have studied it out by the encyclopedia and the mythological dictionary. The plain man often understands everything in the passage except the illustrations. Thus:

> "As some forgotten vest,
> Woven of painted byssus, silkiest,
> Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,
> Left welter where a trireme let it slip
> I' the sea, and vexed a satrap; so the stain
> O' the world forsakes Sordello; how the tinct
> Loosening escapes, cloud after cloud."

How many persons get any intelligible idea from this at first reading? One reviewer * thus explains the passages:

"Now, what is the picture painted here? Analyze it, and this is the result: An eastern satrap, sailing upon a galley or trireme, wears a vest of byssus, dyed with Tyrian purple. He lets it fall overboard, and, as he looks down through the clear sea, sees the purple dye escaping and clouding the water. So Sordello is cleansed from the stain of the world. It is a very beautiful illustration, but its beauty is not perceived till we recollect that purple is taken from the tuft of the "whelk's pearl-sheeted lip," and a garment so dyed, if cast into the sea, throws off its color in tremulous clouds."

It may be so. We would not dogmatize. Whether

* W. J. Dawson: "Literary Leaders of Modern England," Ch. xiii.

the dye would wash out fast enough to be seen in successive "clouds" before the "vest" disappeared from view we are not sure; we can only take the poet's word for it. The same reviewer adds:

"Does anyone see the meaning at first sight? And how many might read it, and never see any meaning at all! This is an example of Browning in his worst mood; and we cannot wonder, when we consider it, that a simple-minded poet like Charles Mackay called him 'the High Priest of the Unintelligible'; or that Browning Societies have had to be invented to reduce his recondite fancies to lucidity."

But such similes are for the closet reader, who has all the time there is, and all the antiquarian books at hand, with which to hammer out and explain the illustrations. For anyone who would address men in the stress and strain of active, hurrying life, such a simile is useless. It is even worse than useless, because it distracts attention by the vain attempt to decipher the obscure and perplexing. Contrast with such obscurity the illustration by the war-correspondent, Coffin, of "Stonewall" Jackson's charge with his massed forces upon the flank of the long-extended Federal line at Chancellorsville:

"That charge broke the Union line *as you would break a stick of candy by striking it on end with a sledge-hammer.*"

That simile, from the well-known and familiar, really explains the military movement, makes it clear to the intellect, and at the same time impresses the imagination. Or take Tennyson's description of the innocent young girl in a moment of surprise:

"Melissa, with her hand upon the lock,
A rosy blonde, and in a college gown,
That clad her like an April daffodilly,
. . . . with her lips apart,

And all her thoughts as fair within her eyes,
As bottom agates seem to wave and float
In crystal currents of the morning seas."

This requirement of intelligibility does not, however, imply that the simile should be drawn from the ordinary, much less from the commonplace. The simile may involve the remote and grand, if only such as the reader or hearer can readily understand or picture. Everyone has read and heard of shipwrecks. Hence we instantly feel the power of Scott's sadly beautiful lines:

"As the tall ship, whose lofty prore
Shall never stem the billows more,
Deserted by her gallant band,
Amid the breakers lies astrand,—
So on his couch lay Roderic Dhu!"

That comparison is as real and as intelligible as it is beautiful in its tender pathos.

But suppose that the author or the orator sees a valuable illustration in some scientific mechanical, or other fact or process with which his readers or hearers cannot be expected to be familiar. Must he reject it? No. Make them familiar with it before he compares it to anything. Let him begin with some introductory statement, such as, "It has been found by scientific research that"—then go on and explain the fact or process in simple phrase till it is clear to every thoughtful mind. Now he can perfect his simile with "*So* in human life—" or "*So* in the affairs of nations—," etc. His simile will be intelligible because his explanation has made it so, and readers or hearers will derive an added delight from the new knowledge thus put within their grasp, and connected with some thought in which they have a practical interest.

A simile must not be carried too far. Scriptural in-

terpreters have laid it down as a rule that "a parable must not be made to go on all fours." If the simile goes too much into detail, the imagination is lost in the assemblage of particulars. This is in part the fault of the example already given from Browning's "Sordello." The "Tyrrhene whelk," the "trireme," and the "satrap" are in the way. What is that "satrap" doing there? What do we care whether there was a "satrap," or not, or whether he was "vexed," or not? We must get by him, and dismiss him from our thoughts before we can reach the real simile of "cloud after cloud" of color.

But, while too many particulars must not crowd upon the canvas, the simile should be thought through, to be sure that no suppressed detail is such as will be likely to occur to the mind of reader or hearer with damaging effect; and, especially in discussion or debate, that nothing is overlooked which may enable an opponent to turn the simile back upon its author with damaging effect. This caution is especially important for the extemporaneous speaker. In preparing his notes he often indicates an illustration merely by a word or phrase, but when he starts in upon it finds that it involves some elements that are not to his purpose, and may even lead the wrong way. He can not stop, and finds his illustration running away with him, like a bicycle without a brake rushing down hill, with the certainty of wreck at the foot. Every illustration should be studied as carefully as the argument,—and even more so, for those who forget the argument are quite sure to remember the illustration.

But how about the sudden illustrations that spring to the lips when the speaker is looking into the eyes of his audience, and which are some of the best he will ever

have? The answer is, that only this very carefulness of training will prepare him to utilize these safely and successfully, as it is only the trained marksman who is likely to succeed with the chance shot. The master of speech can think ahead fast enough to seize these inspirations, and make them spells of power.

Worn and hackneyed similes should be avoided. "As quick as lightning;" "as dark as Egypt;" "as black as a crow;" "as blind as a bat;" "as obstinate as a mule;" "as sharp as a needle;" "as neat as a pin;" "as keen as a brier;" "as true as the needle to the pole;"—all these had vivid meaning once, but have lost all point and edge by continual use. Such similes give to speech or writing an effect of cheapness,—which is the very fact. They show that the speaker or writer has spent no time or labor to secure the gems and gold of speech, but has pitched into his collection the first wayside pebbles he chanced to pick up. But whoever would address an assembly or write for publication aspires to be a leader of men,—and to lead he must be in advance of them. They expect this of him when they give him their time and attention. He defrauds them if he does not offer them something that will pay them for reading or listening; and the punishment of this fraud is automatic; they cease to read or listen. So the cheap style defeats the very purpose of oratory or authorship.

Still more emphatically it must be urged that a simile should never be drawn from objects essentially coarse, inferior, or belittling,—unless for satire or denunciation, and even then with care that one does not seem to degrade what is high, good, and beautiful. Thus, when Butler, in his "Hudibras," says:

> "And, *like a lobster boiled,* the morn
> From black to red began to turn,"

he insults every reader's sense of beauty by comparing the glory of sunrise to so coarse and rude a thing as a boiled lobster. The comparison is not even funny, but simply disgusting. The true use of simile is to beautify and exalt. An example of this you will find in Goldsmith's beautiful description of the village pastor in his famed poem, "The Deserted Village:"

> "And *as a bird each fond endearment tries*
> To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
> He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
> Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

And again, summing up his grand life:

> "To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
> But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
> *As some tall cliff* that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
> Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Of a different, but still of a noble type, are the similes in Byron's poem, "The Destruction of Sennacherib:"

> "The Assyrian came down *like the wolf on the fold,*
> And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold,
> And the sheen of their spears was *like stars on the sea,*
> When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.
>
> "*Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,*
> That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
> *Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,*
> That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
> Hath *melted like snow* in the glance of the Lord!"

The simile is subject to another limitation of a directly opposite character, viz.: The illustration must

never be more or greater or more preoccupying than the matter illustrated. Never attempt to carry a flat or commonplace thought aloft on the wings of soaring imagery. Only a great truth is worthy of a magnificent illustration, and, even so, the truth must be maintained in manifest supremacy. You will sometimes hear a preacher who will give such a realistic description of the earthquake at San Francisco, or the battle of the Marne, that the truth which all that was to illustrate is quite obliterated, and the audience go out thinking of earthquake and battle, quite oblivious of the gospel. The speaker or writer must feel, and so express himself as to make readers or hearers feel, that the image is but a partial representation of a grander, mightier thought. Illustrations must be like the electric lights around Niagara, only revealing the majestic cataract that has been thundering down, whether in light or darkness, through the ages.

The controlling rule is that laid down by Dr. Samuel Johnson:

"A simile, to be perfect, must both illustrate and ennoble its subject." *

The Metaphor.—Metaphor is closely akin to simile, but is more vigorous, intense, and vivacious. When the simile says, "This *is like* that," we realize that the resemblance may be only in some one feature, all non-resembling elements being left out of consideration. But when the metaphor says, "This *is* that," the resemblance is affirmed to be so close and striking that the one word or thing may be substituted for the other. When we read, "The Lord *is* my *rock* and my *fortress*, . . . my *shield* and my trust," we see how much

* "Lives of the Poets."

more forcible those metaphors are than the corresponding similes would have been, "The Lord *is like* a shield and a fortress to me." The mind comes with one bound, as it were, to the fulness of meaning.

Metaphor is not merely in nouns, however, but often also in verbs and adjectives. When Pope says,* "Shoot folly as it flies," the noun "folly" is used in its ordinary and literal meaning. The metaphor is in the verbs "shoot" and "flies," the mind instinctively likening "folly" to a *bird,* which can be *shot on the wing.* Byron writes,† when he would picture the vanished glory of Greece:

> "The warrior's weapon and the sophist's stole
> Are sought in vain, and o'er each mouldering tower,
> Dim with the mist of years, *gray flits the shade of power.*"

Here some would seek the metaphor wholly in the noun "shade," but how feeble it would be, if that were all:—the power of Greece has become a "shade!" The full effect of the imagery is found only by including the adjectives and the verb: "*dim* with the mist of years," "*gray* (with unmeasured age)"; "*flits* (silent, ghost-like) the shade of power."

The limitations upon the use of metaphor are in many respects the same as those already stated upon the use of simile. The metaphor must not be worn and hackneyed:—"He drowned his sorrows in the flowing bowl;" "They have drifted down the stream of time;" "He entered on the stage of public life;" "He shuffled off this mortal coil," etc. When some speaker first said, "Another year has rolled around," the figure was beautiful and impressive with the thought that the great

* "Essay on Man," Ep. 1, line 13.
† "Childe Harold," Can. ii, St. ii.

wheel of time had completed another annual cycle, but the metaphor now comes forth like a forlorn old garment from an attic, threadbare, faded, musty, and dusty. Its instant effect is to suggest that the speaker or writer is incapable of evolving a new thought, and has invited us to a "rummage sale" of ancient relics. The unfortunate survival cheapens all else he may have to say.

One exception should be noted here. We may use the old and familiar if by some original suggestion we can make it new. Under the quickening touch of imagination, even the dead metaphor comes to life. To compare a young girl to a flower, for instance, is a sufficiently familiar figure of speech; but how new it becomes in Wordsworth's lines:

> "She dwelt among the untrodden ways
> Beside the springs of Dove,
> A maid whom there were none to praise,
> And very few to love.
>
> *"A violet by a mossy stone*
> *Half hidden from the eye."* . . .

Then, to this beautiful metaphor he adds a loftier simile:

> *"Fair as a star,* when only one
> Is shining in the sky."

In the midst of the dubious battle of Picardy that opened the campaign of 1918 in France, the memorable proclamation of Field Marshal Haig, which will be one of the immortal documents of the war, centers and turns upon a metaphor. After reciting the terrific onslaught of one hundred and six hostile divisions of the enemy along a fifty mile front, stayed only by the "determined fighting and self-sacrifice" of the British

troops, with the Channel coast and ports in all too close proximity behind their line, the commander says:

"Every position must be held to the last man. There must be no retirement. WITH OUR BACKS TO THE WALL, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight to the end."

The heart-beat stops with the recognition that this great and splendid army, the last hope of the banded nations, has now, in very deed, its "back to the wall." The thrill of resistance stiffens, the summons to the last energy of endurance reaches down into the far depths of the soul. Whoever reads, whoever remembers, that proclamation will read or remember it with these words as the key-note "with our backs to the wall."

By such remolding under the power of imagination and sensibility, the common ceases to be commonplace. To have the power of accomplishing such results, the speaker or writer needs to live every possible moment among the exalted things of life—the beautiful, the refined, the inspiring. He should read freely and generously the best poetry and prose, including the world's great orations; his reading should be chiefly of *books,* rather than of newspapers and magazines; and those books should be the *classics,* that have been approved by the world's best thought, and that have lived long enough to die, if it were possible for them to die,—the immortals. With this must be joined loving study of the beautiful and grand in nature and in art, and association with persons of the strongest intellect, the finest taste, the best powers of expression, the noblest and purest character that one may be able to make his companions. Of course, one who would have widest influence must also be friendly with those who can not directly help him. It is much to know average human

wishes and needs, and how to help those who have least to give; but for the strongest and worthiest influence over those who need it most, one must have stores to give them such as they themselves could never gather. Then that high tribute of olden time may be true of him, "He touched nothing that he did not adorn."

In metaphor, especially, care must be exercised to avoid the mingling of incongruous elements in the same construction. The metaphor is more exposed to this danger than the simile. For the simile is deliberate and careful in statement, with its "as" or "like," so that one is not apt to say in formal phrase that the same thing is "like" two incompatible things. But the metaphor is so sudden, abrupt, and momentary, that one may be whirled along in the rush of thought to associate comparisons that go very ill together. For avoiding this, the two chief cautions to be given are:

1. Never mix a metaphorical with a literal statement in the same immediate connection. Thus:

"Boyle was the *father* of chemistry and the *brother* of the Earl of Cork."

After the metaphorical statement that "Boyle was the *father* of chemistry," we are expecting the metaphorical still; the mind has not time to adjust itself to the sudden drop to a literal statement, but comes down with a jolt.

2. Never mix in the same statement images that are incompatible or mutually contradictory. Thus Addison writes:

> "I *bridle in* my struggling Muse with pain,
> That longs to *launch* into a nobler strain."

Here the metaphors are contained in the two verbs, "bridle" and "launch." By the first the Muse is com-

pared to a horse that must be restrained by bit and "bridle;" then, suddenly, in the very same sentence, the horse is eager to "launch," as a ship, upon the sea of lofty theme! It is related that an ambitious young preacher, extolling the glory of the church, pictured it as a ship "sailing grandly on through battle and storm, past dangerous shoals and shores," and then went on to say:

"After all this stormy voyage, the majestic church still floats in triumphant majesty. And now, my brethren, why does it float? *Because it is founded upon a rock!*"

His closing thought was excellent, and eminently Scriptural, but its connection was most unfortunate. On the eve of the Civil War it is credibly reported that a fiery newspaper writer burst forth with this tremendous warning:

"The *apple* of *discord* has been thrown in our midst, and unless it is *nipped in the bud,* it will *break forth in a conflagration* that will *deluge our land in blood.*"

Here are other specimens:

"We *plunge* into the sea of life, having a divine hand at the *helm.*"

"Democracy began her reign by *feeling the public pulse,* and *trimming her sails,* so as *not to collide too violently with it.*"

That is, Democracy began to "reign" as a queen, but was immediately transformed into a physician, "feeling the public pulse," and then swiftly became a navigator, "trimming her sails," with the thoughtful endeavor "not to collide" with the "public pulse!" After such precaution Democracy certainly should be secure. A sovereign remedy against all confusions such as these is,—if you are not sure how to manage your metaphor,

drop it, and give a plain literal statement. That, it may be hoped, will at least be sense.

Independently of the danger above defined, the speaker or writer must beware of using for the purpose of metaphor a word or phrase that is in itself belittling. Thus, one reporter acclaimed an eminent speaker as "one of the stars of the *horizon* of oratory." When we take the real meaning of "horizon," as the boundary between earth and sky, we see that a "star of the *horizon*" is just as low down as it can be, to be visible at all. Hence, the metaphor was the reverse of a compliment to the orator. Again, an advertiser said of a certain volume, "It is the *peer* of any other work on this subject." He meant to say, doubtless, that it is *superior* to any other, from some confused idea that a "peer" is a nobleman, superior to the common man. But "peer" in such connection as that above quoted means an *equal*. When the law provides that an accused person "shall be judged by a jury of his *peers*," the meaning is not a jury of noblemen,—the very thing the common man in the old days would most desire to be saved from,—but by a jury of his *equals*, citizens of the same rank, and with the same rights as himself. So when Milton wrote, "For Lycidas is dead, and hath not left his *peer*," his meaning was that Lycidas had left no *equal*. Thus you do not give a book distinctive praise by saying that "it is the *peer* of any,"—that is to say, "*as good* as the rest of them."

Antithesis.—Antithesis may be considered in this connection as a reversed simile or metaphor, though it may also consist in other forms of opposition of ideas, that gain force by being set against each other; as white is best seen against black, or as a sudden sound is heard with wonderful distinctness when it breaks in

on the hush of midnight. A fine example of the reversed simile occurs in Mrs. Hemans' poem, "The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers:"

"*Not* as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted came,
*Not* with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;

"*Not* as the flying come,
In silence and in fear;
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer."

The one sure rule for all forms of antithesis is to make all other things in the contrasted clauses as like as possible, that the full effect of the contrast may fall upon the elements that are opposed. Nouns should be contrasted with nouns, verbs with verbs, etc., and the order of words in the contrasted clauses or phrases should be as nearly as possible the same. Thus a black and a white object are in sharpest contrast if both are cubes, or if both are spheres, or the like. When the contrasted sentences, clauses, or phrases are alike in all else, the contrasted terms stand sharply out. Macaulay is the supreme master of antithesis in English literature,—a style in which he had such facility that he often used it to excess. Yet constantly in his writings it bursts upon the reader with exceeding vigor and effectiveness. Thus he says of certain Royalists of the Restoration:

"They valued a prayer or a ceremony, *not* on account of the *comfort* which it conveyed to *themselves, but* on account of the *vexation* which it gave to the *Roundheads,* and were so far from being disposed to purchase *union* by *concession* that they objected to *concession* chiefly because it tended to produce *union.*" *

* "History of England," Ch. ii, p. 102.

PARADOX.—Paradox differs from antithesis in not really stating the contrary or converse, but only appearing to do so; especially in stating, not the contrary of what has been said, but of what the mind would naturally expect as likely to be said. It often affirms something which at first thought seems false, but which is afterward seen to be really and deeply true. Thus, in the saying attributed to the veteran diplomatist, Talleyrand, "Speech was given to man to disguise his thoughts," the mind would expect the conclusion to be, "to express or reveal his thoughts;" but there are certain astute and secretive persons who are never so far from revealing their real intent as when they seem to talk most freely, leading the hearer farther away every moment from what he would learn, along trails of other ideas that lose him in the wilderness. Paradox, however, is often very effective in rousing the mind by the effect of surprise, and, by its convincing truth in spite of first appearances, making a statement unforgetable.

EPIGRAM.—This has been defined as, "any brief saying remarkable for brevity and point." Epigram is frequently marked by antithesis or paradox. Sometimes it makes its point by a mere play upon words. Most of the familiar proverbs are epigrams. Of the paradoxical form, "The child is the father of the man" is a familiar example. The following are some noticeable epigrams:

"The royal crown cures not the headache."
"The scalded dog fears cold water."
"Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."
"We could not see the wood for the trees."
"Weakness of mind is the only fault incapable of correction."

The epigrammatic style is at present very popular

among certain classes. Jaded minds, persons perishing for a "thrill", empty minds, drowsy intellects, too indolent to think any truth through, welcome the pepper and mustard of epigram as pleasant substitutes for thought. That the style leads nowhere does not disturb those who have no mental end in view. Epigram, however, when overdone, at length becomes wearisome. A dinner is not expected to consist wholly of condiments; there comes ultimately a demand for something to eat. Epigram in excess also gives the appearance of insincerity. It becomes evident that the author's chief care is to say the smart—or the smarting—thing, and we know that men really and deeply in earnest do not talk or write that way. The real use of epigram is, after something has been proved or illustrated, to pack the truth into some compendious phrase that memory will not let die.

Irony.—Irony is an unspoken antithesis, where one thing is said, in order that the contrary may be understood, as when Job says to his professed friends, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you"; or when Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Cry aloud, for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." Irony is one of the most natural of the figures of speech; it is freely used by children and by uneducated people, and is at times a very effective weapon of attack; but it falls below the highest dignity, and in the best writing and speaking can be but sparingly used.

The books tell of two figures of speech, called *Metonymy* and *Synechdoche,* which few persons in active life really notice, but which we all constantly use, because they are inwrought into language. Most persons

find it very hard to distinguish one of these from the other:—by which we may be sure that the distinction is not very important. In fact, *metonymy* includes synechdoche, so that we may concentrate our attention wholly upon *metonymy*. Of this, the best definition I have seen is that of Dr. Quackenbos (*Rhetoric*, Pt. iii, Lesson 1, p. 248):

"Metonymy is the exchange of names between things related. It is founded not upon resemblance, but upon relation."

Herein metonymy differs from metaphor. If one thing is put for another because of resemblance, we have metaphor; if because of relation, we have metonymy. Metonymy puts "gray hairs" for "old age"; the "bottle" for "drunkenness"; "the Crescent" for "Mohammedanism"; "the Cross" for "Christianity"; "the crown" for the "royal authority"; "the bench" for the "judge or judges"; "the bar" for "lawyers collectively"; "the chair" for (the one occupying it) "the moderator"; a "sail" or a "keel" for a "ship"; "roof" for "house" or "home", etc.

Metonymy is a familiar, pleasing, and often a very powerful figure. Thus, "England" may be put for all that England represents:—its territory, with its hills and vales and streams and cities; its people, with all they believe and all they cherish; its place among the nations, its reputation for every quality that Englishmen stand for, and that the world honors; its history and its hopes. All that was meant in Nelson's signal, "England expects every man to do his duty"; and every man in the fleet understood it, and felt that it was for him to be worthy of the utmost that great name could mean.

Interrogation.—Interrogation, as a rhetorical figure,

differs from the ordinary asking of questions in that it asks a question to which the speaker or writer knows the answer, though he deems it more effective to ask the hearer or reader to supply it for himself. It may be a question the answer to which will spring instantly to the mind of the person addressed, but will come with more emphasis when formulated as an answer to a direct question. Rhetorical interrogation has two main uses:

1. To awaken expectancy. The hearer may not know the answer, but is instantly intent to find one. We all know how a conundrum will at once enliven a dull company, because each person feels it a challenge to his ingenuity, and sets his wits to work to supply an answer. Interrogation, so used, gives the hearer or reader an expectant interest in all the speaker or writer may now have to advance. He is searching his own thought to see if he himself can answer the question, and, if not, to see whether the speaker or writer can.

2. The second main use of rhetorical interrogation is to clinch conviction, by making the person addressed supply an inevitable answer. That answer may be some essential and self-evident truth, which no one can doubt; or it may spring from facts so well-known that they need not be mentioned. Then the question has power by simply recalling well-known truth or fact, and bringing it into connection with the matter in hand:—often a great achievement. Or, the answer may be from fact and argument which the speaker or writer has already given, and in regard to which he appeals to the reader or hearer to say, what is now the inescapable conclusion? A famed oration of Patrick Henry, which all American schoolboys have loved to declaim, bristles with rousing interrogation,—seventeen questions in twenty-six lines.

"Judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves and the House? . . . Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? . . . I ask gentlemen, Sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy in this quarter of the world to call for all this assemblage of navies and armies? . . . And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find that have not already been exhausted?

"They tell us, Sir, that we are weak. . . . But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantoms of hope, till our enemies have bound us hand and foot? . . . Our brethren are already in the field. Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? (To all which, clinching the sure decision of every patriotic heart, he fulminates his own eager answer.) Forbid it, Almighty God!"

See how the swift questions crowd the argument on! The power of interrogation is, that, if properly used, it compels the reader or hearer to answer the question from his own mind. Thus the answer seems to him,—and is,—not something that the writer or speaker has thrust upon him, but something that he himself has evolved by his own thinking; and there is no such triumph of eloquence as when the one addressed is made to think of the conclusion as his very own,—the irresistible working of his own mind.

EXCLAMATION is another eminently natural figure of speech. Its power is that, in it, art follows nature, as a skilful landscape gardener follows natural vales and dells and heights in laying out a park, only removing what is harsh, inharmonious, or unsightly. Thus Job, in his distress, says of his God, who seems to have forsaken him:

"*Oh, that I knew* where I might find him! *that I might come* even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments."

The limitation is, that the thought must be really great or thrilling enough to justify the form. Otherwise the exclamation seems like a poor bit of acting. The climax of such pretense is, when the inexperienced but gushing young writer relies for the whole force of exclamatory utterance upon the exclamation-point at the end of a sentence that would have been much better closed with a period.

PERSONIFICATION.—This figure of speech treats things without life as persons, with all the qualities of living beings. The things personified may be inanimate objects, as rocks, mountains, sun, moon, stars, etc.; or they may be abstract ideas or qualities, as truth, falsehood, virtue, vice, etc.; or organized entities, as church, state, family, or the like. Whenever an object without life is treated as possessing the attributes of living beings, we have personification.

One of the simplest and readiest forms of personification is by the use of pronouns. Since, in English, all inanimate objects are of the neuter gender, designated by "it" or "its", the application to such an object of a masculine or feminine pronoun at once personifies it. Thus, when the familiar hymn says of the Church:

"For *her* my tears shall fall,
For *her* my prayers ascend,
To *her* my toils and cares be given,
Till toils and cares shall end,"

we readily perceive how much higher and more tender is the effect than if the lines were made to read, "For *it* my tears shall fall," etc.

Nearly akin to this personification by pronouns is personification by adjectives,—which is so common as often not to be recognized as a figure of speech. Man so naturally ascribes his own feelings and motives to the elements and the natural objects around him, that he almost instinctively speaks of "an *angry* sea," "the *thirsty* ground", etc. Yet such figures are capable of great power and beauty.

Still more effective is personification by verbs, because then inanimate objects are represented as acting in a way appropriate to living beings. With verbs so used, nouns are often very effectively associated to complete the expression of personal action, as when the prophet says:

"The mountains *saw* thee, and they *trembled;*
The overflowing of the water passed by;
The deep *uttered his voice,*
And *lifted up his hands on high.*"

Hebrew poetry is very rich in such personification, often reaching the highest sublimity of imagery, making all nature respond to the spiritual ideas expressed. There is no storehouse of such utterance comparable to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This element also runs, often unnoticed, through our poetry and the highest oratory, as well as description and narrative, and even lights up common speech. We catch the gleam,—the light, life, and feeling it imparts, without analyzing

the utterance to find the source of the impression. Thus, in Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope":

"Why do those cliffs of shadowy tint appear
More sweet than all the landscape *smiling* near?"

Or when Shakespeare makes Cassius tell how

"The torrent *roar'd,* and we did *buffet* it,
With lusty sinews throwing it aside,
And stemming it, with hearts of controversy."

Or Bryant, in his "Hymn to the North Star":

"The sad and solemn night
Hath yet her multitude of cheerful fires;
The glorious host of light
*Walk the dark hemisphere* till she retires."

APOSTROPHE.—This is a form of impassioned address to some absent or unseen person, as to some departed hero, to the Deity, or to some personified quality or attribute, or even to some inanimate object that one would bring into the foreground by strong appeal. Apostrophe is frequently, but not always or necessarily combined with personification. Consider Webster's apostrophe to the dead, that breaks in upon his address to the surviving soldiers of Bunker Hill: *

"But, alas! you are not all here! Time and the sword have thinned your ranks. Prescott, Putnam, Stark, Brooks, Reed, Pomeroy, Bridge!—our eyes seek for you in vain amid this broken band. But let us not too much grieve that you have met the common fate of men. You lived to see your country's independence established and to sheathe your swords from war. On the light of Liberty, you saw arise the light of Peace, like 'another morn risen on mid-noon;' and the sky on which you closed your eyes was cloudless.

"But—ah—him! the first great martyr in this great cause! . . . falling ere he saw the star of his country rise; pouring

* First Bunker Hill Oration, June 17, 1825.

out his generous blood like water, before he knew whether it would fertilize a land of freedom or of bondage!—how shall I struggle with the emotions that stifle the utterance of *thy* name! Our poor work may perish, but *thine* shall endure! . . . Wheresoever among men a heart shall be found that beats to the transports of patriotism and liberty, its aspirations shall be to claim kindred with *thy spirit!*"

HYPERBOLE.—As a figure of speech, hyperbole is intentional overstatement, intended to be understood as overstatement. In this it differs from mere exaggeration, which may be due to carelessness, ignorance or recklessness, and has none of the artistic qualities that give hyperbole rhetorical consideration. Hyperbole is one of the most dangerous of the figures of speech. If too much indulged in, it tends to degenerate into mere exaggeration; and exaggeration has the cumulative power of all intoxicants. The victim of the habit becomes unaware of his own excess, and feels any sober, literal statement to be flat and tame. On the other hand, audiences or readers long fed upon such a style come to miss their wonted stimulus, when offered sober truth. The "thrill" is lacking; and the dose must be constantly increased. This explains the wild utterances often heard in political, and even in reform, conventions. It is only the extreme statement that gets the applause, and speakers are thus tempted on to more and more desperate excess. At the same time, for judicious readers or hearers, exaggerated utterance loses the sense of reality,—of the practical, the exact, and the true. They are compelled always to make allowance, and come to allow too much, like the man who loses his train because his watch was fast, and he has overdiscounted the discrepancy. The extreme utterance may excite, but the substantial alone convinces.

The essential thing about hyperbole is, that the speaker

or writer, together with the hearers or readers, shall recognize it as conscious overstatement made for the sake of impressive imagery. Then from the telling figure it is always possible to pass to the dealing with literal fact or practical duty. This figure may be used playfully with pleasing effect, as when Hawthorne writes:

"On this particular afternoon, so excessive was the warmth of Judge Pyncheon's kindly aspect that (such, at least, was the rumor about town) an additional passage of the water-carts was found essential, in order to lay the dust occasioned by so much extra sunshine."

On the other hand, hyperbole may rise to the height of the sublime. This, again, is especially the case in the Hebrew poetry, where the exuberance and the limitless daring of the Oriental imagination have full sway. Thus we see it in that psalm of David, "when the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul":

"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

"Then *the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken,* because he was wroth.

"*He bowed the heavens also, and came down:* and *darkness was under his feet.* The Lord also *thundered in the heavens,* and *the Highest gave his voice.*

"He sent from above, he took me, he *drew me out of many waters.*"

The trial had been so terrible, the danger so overwhelming, that the deliverance, as pictured in vivid remembrance, was as if all that had happened, and all nature had been moved at the mighty intervention of Jehovah. Then fitly follows the calm literal statement:

"He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me."

Climax.—This is one of the mightiest of rhetorical figures. The word is from the Greek *klimax*, "a ladder", thought of only as a means of ascent. Coming down is so easy that rhetoric takes no account of it, except as a blemish under the name of *anti-climax*. Climax is such an advance of thought that each new idea, each new word, leads the mind on to something higher, stronger, more beautiful, or more impressive than that which last preceded, until at the very loftiest thought, the strongest argument, the most impressive appeal to emotion, the movement ends. When the greatest thing is said, why seek to add to it? Why try still to climb, when the summit rock is already under your foot?

The impression made by such an advance is far more powerful than if the chief thing had been said first, because the mind has been both prepared and stimulated,—the thought every moment rising and expanding,—"going from strength to strength." Then, at the end, the greatest thought is left as the last impression, to have, without check, hindrance, or confusion, its abiding effect upon the mind.

Every composition, every oration, every poem, should be climactic. The closing utterance may not be in every case the most splendid, but it should be that to which the movement of the whole has led up,—the greatest thing then to be said or written,—the thought worth leaving as the last in memory. Any series of paragraphs should be climactic. A single sentence or paragraph may also be climactic with powerful effect; but it is not desirable that every sentence or every paragraph be so constructed. Such writing would have an artificial and unnatural effect, for the excellent reason that it would be artificial and unnatural. Something must be conceded to freedom and unstudied simplicity, and a

sentence or paragraph, like a stream in a landscape, may fulfil the poetic figure that, "wandering at its own will," it "yet doth ever flow aright."

The finest examples of climax in our language have been many times quoted. Among them all, Burke's cumulative recital of the charges against Hastings still stands unsurpassed, if not unequaled. Perhaps we may best pass that as too familiar. Let us turn back in the same mighty address to the prelude of those impeachment charges, the rush of the rising wind before the crash of the storm:

"My Lords, what is it we want here to a great act of national justice? Do you want a cause, my Lords? You have the cause of oppressed princes, of undone women of the first rank, of desolated provinces, and of wasted kingdoms.

"Do you want a criminal, my Lords? When was there so much iniquity ever laid to the charge of anyone?—No, my Lords, you must not look to punish any other such delinquent from India. Warren Hastings has not left substance enough in India to nourish such another delinquent."

Figures of speech impart to style variety and animation. A simile, if explanatory, relieves the mind from direct, continuous listening or studying, and throws a side-light upon the thought; if it is a mere ornament of style, yet, if fitly devised, it is animating, as the mind says, "Why, this is not only true, but beautiful"; if it is but a light touch of fancy, it still gives the mind a moment's play, from which it turns refreshed to serious work. At another time a question relieves the strain of continuous statement or argument, and calls the mind to be not merely receptive, but definitely active, thinking out toward a result for itself. So a touch of irony may be more telling than labored censure, because the mind then reacts from listening or reading to spontaneous activity, as it reconstructs the ironical saying, and

itself postulates the real underlying thought. The average mind becomes wearied and impatient in following for a long time any one continuous track of thought, and finds in figures of speech welcome diversion and relief, while these, if well managed, do not detract from, but heighten, the final impression.

But, above all else, figures of speech are of value as appealing to the imagination. Hence, they are essential to the elevated style. It is true that much power may, upon occasion, be exerted by the severely literal presentation of fact. An example of this often referred to is found in the chapters of the Gospels which narrate the closing scenes in the life of Christ. They move the soul to its depths, because so severely restricted to the recital of incidents which seem as if even now passing in the reader's very presence. Dr. Hugh Blair in his "Lectures on Rhetoric" remarks that "The strong pathetic and the pure sublime not only have little dependence upon these ornaments of style, but generally reject them." He instances as an example the words in Genesis, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." In such case the imagination is called into action without direct appeal, and plays around or behind the severely simple phrase. We feel the brooding, unbroken "darkness upon the face of the deep," and swiftly picture what it must have been when first in the march of creation "there was light." But the ordinary imagination is not sufficiently awake nor sufficiently vigorous to rise of itself to the impassioned thoughts of mighty souls. It must be caught and borne up on the wings of the imagery by which they struggle to put into human speech thoughts which still transcend all words. Only so could the passionate intensity of psalmist and prophet have found expression, as in the rapt visions of Isaiah.

So every orator who has greatly moved the souls of men has depended upon leading them through and beyond the concrete and the material to loftier thought and intenser feeling than could be spoken in literal words.

There is the simile which pictures, "*Oh, that I had wings like a dove* [for free, strong, long-sustained flight]; then would I fly away and be at rest." There is the metaphor, which, as it were, concentrates thought and feeling around a mental image so vivid as to need no comparative word; perhaps bringing visions of peace and quietness, "*The Lord is my shepherd*—; He *leadeth me* in green pastures and beside the still waters"; or visions of struggle, defense, and power, "The Lord *is* my rock, my fortress, my shield, and my trust." An apostrophe to a departed hero seems to bring him out of the past, back from beyond the veil, till all that he was becomes more real to us, as we feel ourselves standing in his very presence. An apostrophe to a city, a nation, a state, embodies its thousands as one, and crowds centuries into the present moment, as when Byron exclaims:

> "O Rome! my country! city of the soul!
> The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
> Lone mother of dead empires!"

Then, with swift change to metaphor, how thrilling!

> "The Niobe of nations! there she stands,
> Childless and crownless in her voiceless woe;
> An empty urn within her wither'd hands,
> Whose holy dust was scatter'd long ago."

All the pages of Gibbon's detailed history do not so picture the fall of Rome, nor so touch the heart as these few lines of poetic imagery. Hence, the writer of prose, and above all, the orator, needs to read much of poetry for the arousal and development of imaginative power.

Beyond the world of the seen and temporal is the greater world—the universe—of the unseen and eternal. Children, with their limited powers and reach, find their joy and freedom largely in the land of "make-believe." In all the advance of life never do we reach the limit where ideas greater and nobler than the literal, the technical, the material, and the prosaic, are not waiting for us, if we have but eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to feel. Imagination enables us to "mount up on wings as eagles," till in the vastness voices unheard at other times call to the soul from the starry spaces. Whoever can lead us beyond the concrete, the ordinary, and the commonplace by arraying around the truth images of beauty and power, of tenderness, love, hope, and unselfish devotion, opens before us the door of a life wider, richer, and grander, more joyous and more satisfying, than is ever entered without imagination's exalting and beneficent aid.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## INVENTIVE ART IN SPEAKING AND WRITING

One may sometimes chance to read the same news-item in two different papers. In the one, all is clear, vivid, interesting, culminating. You read it greedily, and remember it perfectly. In the other, all is entangled and confusing, and you are out of patience before you reach the end. So simple a matter as the telling of news requires an art in the telling. So in every subject ever treated in speech or writing there is an art in the treatment, on which its interest and power largely depend. Behind all statement of truth or fact, all reasoning, all expression of feeling, must be the shaping power which may bring the thought of writer or speaker most effectively to act upon the mind to which it is addressed. This shaping power rhetoricians have called invention, from the Latin *invenio,* "find." This may not be the happiest term, but it has been long and widely used, and it is difficult to substitute for it any other equally comprehensive.

Rhetorical invention is the finding what to say, and how to say it from start to finish. It is the inventive art by which the speaker or writer brings some thought into effective contact with other minds.

Every library is full of books written with laborious industry by authors who have known almost everything except how to tell what they knew. Rhetorical invention supplies this fatal lack. Every public speaker,

probably, has experienced what is known as "stage fright," when he would be aware of himself as standing before an audience and expected to address them, while unconscious of anything that could ever be spoken about, and of anything that could ever be said about anything. The universe was filled by the expectant audience and his own unresponsive and incompetent self, isolated in the awful vacuum of absolute intellectual paralysis. There are times when a ream of white paper seems to have an equivalent effect upon an author. Rhetorical invention breaks the spell, supplying, first, something to be spoken or written about, and, secondly, something to be said or written about it.

### The Subject or Theme

That which is to be spoken or written about is, in a general way, called the Subject; but there is an advantage in distinguishing between the Subject and the Theme, letting the subject stand for the whole general idea or mass of thought that the speaker or writer has to consider, while the theme may be defined as the essence or gist of that subject, so far as it suits his purpose to deal with it. A subject, whether presented by others, by the demand of circumstances, or by the first suggestions of one's own mind, is seldom so clear-cut, so accurately defined and limited, as it needs to be, in order to become the basis of the discourse. The speaker or writer frequently needs to digest, define, analyze, and variously limit the subject originally presented to his mind, in order to obtain a theme on which he can work effectively for an entire discourse. Thus the Theme might be termed the revised or perfected Subject.

The Theme has been well defined as "the working idea

of the discourse."* It is the conception that underlies and dominates all that is to be said or written then and there. It is the substratum of all, and at the same time the test by which every item must be judged as to its correspondence and harmony with that primal conception. The theme must so pervade the speaker's or the writer's own mind as to have a selective and controlling power over all his thoughts and materials, so that whatever will not agree with or enforce that theme will be resolutely rejected. A really central and dominating theme will so pervade a composition that anything not in harmony with that theme will ring false and hollow, and hearers or readers will be dulled, jarred, or repelled by the intrusion of that foreign element, without knowing why. The speaker will be aware that he is suddenly losing his audience. In the written article the effect is of an unexplained break. However excellent, elegant, or beautiful that incongruous element may be by and for itself, it will detract from the power of the composition as a whole. The matter may be so good as to delude the author. He cannot see why it is, that when all was moving well, suddenly the chariot wheels seem to be taken off, and progress is checked. Then, perhaps, it occurs to him, "That is good, in itself, but not in harmony with the present theme. Some time that may become part of an independent discourse or treatise. Here and now it must be banished." The ideal of oratory or authorship is, that the theme shall take possession both of the man and the utterance, so that for the time the speaker or writer is the slave of the theme, moved on by a tide so strong that he cannot and would not resist it, only fearing lest some eddy may sweep him out of the

* Genung: "Elements of Practical Rhetoric," Pt. ii, Ch. ii, p. 248.

current, and force him to land on some unwelcome shore.

The theme may be directly stated, in which case it is known as the Expressed Theme; or it may be silently inwrought into the composition, to be evolved by hearers or readers, perhaps unconsciously, perhaps even in spite of themselves, as the work moves on, in which case we have what is known as the Diffused or Pervading Theme.

The Expressed Theme has the advantage of simplicity and directness. All parties know whither they are, or ought to be going. The hearer or reader can be sure in which direction he is moving, and is able, on occasion, to retrace his path. Hence the expressed theme is commonly used in sermons, in legal pleas or arguments, in scientific discourses, in senatorial addresses, in political appeals, and often—though not always—in popular essays. For fair and orderly debate it is essential that the theme be a definite proposition, to the exact terms of which both the affirmative and negative must be strictly held. The preacher urging some spiritual truth or practical duty, the lawyer addressing a court or a jury, a man of science explaining some discovery or some natural law, a political leader arguing for or against certain legislation or governmental action, a writer defending some view of truth for popular reading:—in a word, any one dealing directly with practical matters—can seldom do better than to express the theme on which his whole work is based, and to take hearers or readers from the outset into definite conjunction with himself in his purpose and endeavor. The expressed theme should be brought to such definiteness and exactness of statement that hearers or readers cannot hold the speaker or writer responsible for anything aside from or beyond that predicated statement, while, at the same time, that

exact statement holds the speaker or writer to a fixed course, from which he will not allow himself to depart. So far is such precision of theme from cramping or hampering the speaker or writer that it gives him the assurance and security which the locomotive has when it adheres unswervingly to the supporting and guiding rails. Whatever line of literary work he may ultimately follow, every young speaker or writer will do well during the training period to give much attention to the formulating and development of the expressed theme, so that he can at any time shape up his material according to this method, and that the power of such expression shall become a natural and dependable mental capacity. The habit of such mental action will control him, even when he does not definitely think of it, and all his work will be better for its unifying influence.

The Diffused or Pervading Theme, on the contrary, is the one suited for description, narration, or dramatic composition. In this style, the author not merely leaves the theme unexpressed, but carefully avoids its expression. Nothing could so kill interest at the start, as to say, "I will now tell you a story to illustrate the danger of listening to flattery." But the old fable of the Fox, who inveigled the Crow into dropping the cheese in the attempt to sing, has a perennial interest, and silently teaches its lesson. If the theme is appended at the close, —"This fable teaches",—the expression is always jarring. Even children shun this style. A little girl at a summer resort was the pet of a number of gentlemen, who told her their best stories; but among them all she was most attracted to one eminent clergyman, and on being asked the reason, calmly replied, "Because he has no morals." The others had appended "morals" to their stories, so that she might be sure to get the lesson. But

the great man knew how to tell a story so that its moral was interwoven, and had no need to be tacked on the outside. When the novelist or the dramatist has to tell in express terms what his novel or play is to teach, he has missed the true power of his art. On the other hand, the Diffused Theme can rarely have place in oratory. The speech which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Mark Antony at Cæsar's funeral is masterly as a dramatic conception, but any orator who should make such an attempt in real life would be greatly in danger of influencing his audience against his purpose.

But whether expressed or not, the theme must be clearly manifest to the speaker or writer himself, and dominate his whole thought. In a story the theme may be what has been called "the narrative conception," the author's vision of the story as a whole, which controls all grouping of particulars. In a poem the theme may be some conception of beauty, grandeur, or power, or even of terror, such as an artist might paint upon canvas or carve in marble by and for itself, with no ulterior purpose. In a description the speaker or writer, if he would be clear and impressive, must have some well-defined impression which the scene has produced upon his own mind. Nature is what we see in it, and that impression his description can unfold to his audience. That primal conception will guide him in the choice of the particulars he selects. The reader may only collect the theme as the result of his reading. With the writer the theme controls the production, and the theme most clearly and definitely expressed by speaker or writer is commonly the result of thorough study and analysis of his subject in his own mind. When once evolved, it sets for him a standard to which all his work must conform.

Among many characteristics which should mark the theme, three may be especially noted.

1. The theme should have *Distinction,* that is distinctiveness, to set off some part of the great realm of knowledge and of thought for especial treatment on the existing occasion. Thus Ruskin, in "Two Paths," says of "human invention,"

> "Out of the infinite heap of things around us in the world, it chooses a certain number which it can thoroughly grasp, and presents this group to the spectator in the form best calculated to enable him to grasp it also, and to grasp it with delight."

To the traveler visiting Rome, the Campagna, that undulating plain stretching from the city to the Alban Hills miles away on the one side and to the horizon line in other directions, brings no special sense of vastness. It is a wide plain, and that is all. But when an insignificant portion of that space, six hundred feet in length by four hundred and fifty in breadth, is set off and walled in with stone, the eye and the mind are deeply impressed by the measurable and comprehensible immensity of Saint Peter's church. A limited vastness has become appreciable to the sense.

The young writer always has the feeling that the broader his subject the more he will have to say; and generation after generation of students are surprised to learn that the very reverse is the fact. Thus, if one were to take "Education" for his theme, he would feel as if in a wilderness, not knowing where to set his foot nor which way to turn. But if he will treat "Education in the Home," or "The Kindergarten"; or if he will discuss "Primary," "Secondary," "Collegiate," or "Technical" Education, he will be surprized at the fulness and fruitfulness of any one of these restricted

topics. The theme must be the subject reduced to a distinct and manageable entity. Often the first important step that a speaker or writer can take, when a subject is assigned to him, is to limit that subject to a statement or topic which he can handle effectively. In literary work of every kind we constantly find fulfilled the paradox that "A part is greater than the whole."

2. The theme must have *Relation.* It must somehow touch matter of interest to those addressed. The most thorough and learned lecture on "The Hebrew Vowel-Points" would be intolerable as a lecture and unreadable as a book for the majority of people, because they do not care in the slightest degree about the matter, and it is difficult to see how it could be made to connect with ordinary human interests to-day. But let us suppose that one were assigned as a subject, "The Ancient Assyrian Empire." It is possible to bring that subject into touch with present human interests. For instance, there are great numbers of people who are interested in Bible history. The Assyrian history might be taken up at the point where it first touches that of the Hebrews. Then it would be easy to run back and note what the great empire had been doing in its earlier period, showing how it had come to be what it was in Biblical times. The rude idolatry of Assyria, as opposed to the pure monotheism of the Hebrews, is another obvious element of contrast, and so of interest. The real theme would then be "The Ancient Heathen Empire of Assyria as Contrasted with the Hebrew Theocratic Commonwealth." That would be the basis of thought on which the speaker or writer would be working, and which he would bring all his materials to illustrate and enforce. Of course, that theme would never do for a title. He must seek a title having some element of attractiveness, and prob-

ably expressing but a small part of his controlling thought; as, for instance, "The Assyrian Oppressor of Israel." Or, again, he might find another element of Relation to present human interests by contrasting Despotism at its Maximum with the democratic systems fast taking control of the world to-day. Somehow he must bring his theme into touch with things that men think of and care for in the living world.

3. The theme must have *Unity*. If it has not, the discourse will be what people call "rambling"; and few readers or hearers are willing to wander aimlessly and far afield, even in company with some one of high intellectual ability.

The test of unity is, whether the whole gist of the subject can be reduced to one compact phrase or proposition. Until the writer can so reduce it for himself, he is not in a position to go to work upon it for others. He must, so to speak, walk round and round his subject, view it from every side and in every light, till from it he has evolved one controlling thought, around which everything in the whole treatment shall center, and to which in the conclusion all shall at last return. Such is the comprehensive result which must be the ideal of every author and of every orator, as of every artist.

Thus the architect masses the brick and stone and glass around one viewless thought, till the dead matter becomes alive with the conception of a living soul. He builds a great library with such an aspect of compact inclusiveness that from afar the beholder feels that some choice treasure is massed under its gilded dome. You pass the silent-closing door into the white marble vastness, with the upward-reaching stairway on either hand, graceful chiseled forms clinging around the balustrades or holding aloft the delicately molded lamps, while his-

toric pictures look down from panels far above, and arched aisles and alcoves open before your vision with perspective of invitation and promise. A nameless something in every stone and every line says, "This is a place for study and thought." So compelling is the effect that there is scarce need of the gilded motto "SILENCE," that meets you as you open the door into the stately and well-appointed reading-room. The dominant impression of the great, beautiful building is one: Meditation, study, thought.

Similarly a landscape artist will lay out a vast park, so that every winding road, every overarching tree, every clump of shrubbery, every gleaming stream or lake, makes harmonious appeal to the sense of the beautiful in nature.

There is an equestrian statue at the junction of Fourteenth Street and Vermont Avenue in Washington that is a study in unity. From whichever side you view it, the impression is one. The horse is a beautiful animal, a model of grace, swiftness and power. He stands light on his feet as a bird about to fly. Yet he is steadfast, waiting on the higher intelligence of his commander. The man is firm, erect in the saddle, his whole figure braced with the strain of intense feeling.

Yet there is no flurry of excitement. The horse is not prancing. The rider is not thinking of horsemanship. As you approach from the side or the rear, you see that both man and horse are intent on something far before them. The horse, whose fine head with dilated nostrils and forward listening ears you catch beyond the rider's shoulder, is watching what his equine intellect enables him to apprehend of the scene in the distance. The rider, too, is looking and listening afar. Both are watchful, eager, expectant, yet steadfast. As you advance

toward the front, the impression deepens, till you come full before the figure, when all else is lost in the face of the man. There it all is,—the forward vision, keen, eager, vivid, that will miss not a movement on all the field, the repressed energy, ready to speak or act on the first instant of need,—yet, withal, grand, masterful, calm, strong to endure and to wait; to fail, if it must be, while doing all that man can do; or, if it may be, through all and in spite of all, to conquer.

The whole story is told in bronze, and you feel as you gaze that through all that hazardous, doubtful, glorious day, amid imminent peril of defeat and disaster, unterrified, unshaken, with intent alertness for action, but having under all the still, firm energy of silent endurance, so abode Thomas, "the Rock of Chickamauga."

Such unity of conception underlies all that is best in literature. Thus the "Iliad" opens with "the wrath of Achilles," the doughty warrior, the best soldier in the whole Greek army, angered by the selfish despotism of King Agamemnon. Achilles' wrath vents itself in simply retiring from battle, and leaving the Greeks to do the best they can without him. The story goes on with accounts of vain enterprises and disastrous battles, till at last Achilles, maddened by the death of his dearest friend, forgets his personal resentment, rushes into battle, slays Hector, the foremost champion of resisting Troy, and once again takes his place as the leader of Grecian warriors. The poet does not pursue the story to the capture of Troy. He has told enough: Achilles, the irresistible, is again in the forefront of battle; the mightiest defender of Troy is dead; the imagination of every reader can foresee the proud city's fall; and like a master artist, the poet leaves imagination to complete the picture.

Gibbon's vast history of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire", extending over fourteen centuries, from the reign of Trajan to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, has one continuous movement from the splendor of Rome in the pride of her power to the crushing of the last remnant of that power under the assault of the ruthless Saracen. Every barbarian tribe that assails the imperial frontiers is pictured in its far-off home, traced through its devastating march, and its full story told in victory or defeat. All the oppression and corruption within the Empire, that sapped the power of her once resistless legions, is patiently analyzed. Yet always the story returns upon the "Decline", and terminates at last with the "Fall". The last sentence of the six matchless volumes answers to the first. Every episode and every incident is held in subjection to the one controlling thought.

Turn, again, to a narrative poem, like Scott's "Marmion." It opens with the hero in the full splendor of power and fame, received at a sumptuous banquet in a baronial castle, as he goes on a mission from the king. In the midst of the entertainment one of his retainers sings a song containing the stanza:

"Where shall the traitor rest, he, the deceiver,
Who could win maiden's breast, ruin and leave her?
In the lost battle, borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying."

Marmion's heart sinks within him with a sudden thrill of remorse, for the song brings to memory one whom he has betrayed. The poem sweeps on through many a scene of excitement and splendor, honors gathering thick about the warrior chief;—till we reach the melancholy close:

"With that, straight up the hill there rode
Two horsemen drenched with gore,
And in their arms, a helpless load,
A wounded knight they bore.
. . . The falcon crest and plumage gone,
Can that be haughty Marmion?"

Then in his half delirious faintness the stricken warrior murmurs:

"In the lost battle borne down by the flying,
Where mingles war's rattle with groans of the dying."

It is true that Scott, with his hearty optimism, must fling a light upon the cloud. The tide of war turns, and England wins, but in the very moment of victory, on the battle verge, Marmion dies alone.

The same law governs the novel. Thus in Dickens' "David Copperfield", the interest centers around two characters, the neglected orphan boy, David, who fights his way up to success and eminence, and Steerforth, the spoiled darling of wealth, who closes a life of harmful self-indulgence by a tragic death. "Dombey & Son" depicts mercantile selfishness. The conception of life held by the prosperous Mr. Dombey is thus outlined:

"The earth was made for Dombey & Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their ships; rainbows gave them promise of fair weather; winds blew for or against their enterprises; stars and planets circled in their orbits to preserve inviolate a system of which they were the center."

The tale goes on through a proud and stern career of conflict and sorrow, till, at the end, the broken old merchant is rescued from the last disaster by the power of a sentiment which he had always despised—a daughter's tender, self-devoted love.

Each of Irving's short stories is complete from start to finish. Rip Van Winkle, the good-natured idler, who would work at any business but his own, and help any person who had no claim upon him, and who joined with his easy-going idleness the love of liquor that commonly accompanies it, helps the stranger carry a keg up the mountain, readily consents to act as waiter for the mysterious company whom he finds at their games, tastes the liquor which he is passing around, finds it good, and drinks till he falls into a drunken sleep, from which he wakes after twenty years to find how far the civilization, which he had never helped, has gone on without him. Ichabod Crane, the schoolmaster of Sleepy Hollow, had prepared himself by a long course of superstitious training to be the victim of the Headless Horseman, who chases him out of his beloved retreat with clouds of dust, thunder of hoofs, and ignominious fall.

We might multiply instances without number to show how the shaping of poem, oration, story, or essay around one dominant thought is the essential element of its charm and power. Sometimes a subject made up of ill-assorted or even discordant elements must be forced to yield a theme.

Since all items cannot be treated at once, there must be some selection and order of treatment. That is the *Plan* of the discourse. Occasionally we meet a person in whose mind all opinions and all remembered facts are mingled in a formless and orderless chaos. A lawyer may have a perfectly well-intentioned and willing witness, but utterly incapable of orderly thinking. Items are poured forth without the slightest reference to their importance or connection. Questions, unless very adroit and patient, are found only to confuse. At length, amid a flood of insignificant particulars, the one vital item

of the testimony is accidentally dropped out. Many children exhibit this mental condition, and parents and experienced teachers learn to "let them tell their story in their own way," and then themselves shape all into order and connection. But no person of such mentality can lead or interest others by speech or writing, even to the extent of reporting news-items for a daily paper. One of the very first requisites for the speaker or writer is to master the process and the habit of orderly thinking. For whatever is to be said or written, there must be a rational plan.

### The Plan

The plan distributes what the theme concentrates.

While the author must have bent his best energies toward grasping the whole subject at once, in order to get his theme, he can not expect his hearers or readers to start where he then left off. He must present the thought in varied detail, that they may apprehend it item by item. A great river may flow through arid plains, bearing a flood of waters uselessly to the sea; but by draining off the waters into orderly intersecting channels across the land, the well-distributed streams will transform desert sands into fruitful fields.

The human mind can not comprehend all truth at once, and often loses the substance of thought in the vagueness of a severely condensed statement. There is a mythical anecdote of a Persian emperor who ordered his vizier to examine the great imperial library and report to him what in it was superfluous. After prolonged study, the vizier reported that all the truth contained in the library might be summed up in the one word "God." Whereupon the emperor ordered a golden plate inscribed with the divine name to be placed in the central hall

of the library, and all the books to be burned. But by that act he destroyed all the steps of progressive ascent by which the mind could reach the central idea. He burned down all the stairways by which thought might climb to the Great Supreme. How different the method of the Hebrew psalmist and prophet:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained,

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. . . .

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"—*Ps.* viii.

"Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?"—*Is.* xl.

How the thought is led up from the things visible and familiar to some possible conception of the majesty of Deity! The distributing plan must be wrought out by careful thought and every thought well adjusted to every other. The fault of many a brilliant writer is impatience of the machinery of an orderly plan. It is grand to have the dream of a soaring bridge, linking height to height, looking light as gossamer, yet proving firm as the everlasting hills, but all this depends upon the mathematical measurement of truss and girder and the perfect setting of the rivets in every joint. Many an ambitious

structure has fallen in wreck for want of such commonplace accuracy. How shall this be attained?

The development of the theme, already described, is sure to give some elements of the plan, such as supporting reasons, objections to be met, questions to be answered, elements of likeness to or contrast with other subjects, etc. It then devolves upon the speaker or writer to marshal these in intelligent order, and to fill up what is lacking in this general scheme.

It is by no means necessary, and it is often highly undesirable, that he should present the various considerations to hearers or readers in the very order in which they occurred to him. Those he addresses need not be led along every blind path he has followed in vain pursuit, and into every morass he has waded through. The good guide is the one who can keep us out of those very things. The advantage of his going first is to make sure a plain path for those who follow him. There is nothing of so little interest to the world in general as one's own past mental processes. We all know the individual who can not give his opinion on any subject without recounting what he told his wife or his neighbor or his enemy last week or last year. What he once said seems to have a historic value for him and to be worthy of indefinite repetition. But the effective speaker or writer must hold his own personality negligible, and think from the side of those he addresses. The question is not, How did I attain this truth? but, How can I best lead others to it? The answer to that last question determines his plan.

There are minds so intensely logical, that on the first presentation of a subject all items in the development of the thought present themselves in orderly array, and such a thinker can at once lay off a connected scheme

of treatment. Persons so constituted often become teachers, and assume that such logical division of a subject is easy and natural for every one. But to the ordinary mind the various points of a subject are likely to present themselves in no systematic order, and the bringing of them to the most suitable arrangement is a matter of much study and experiment.

The plan should have

1. *Unity.*—The unity of the theme must pervade the plan. All that has been said of unity in the theme may be applied with even increased emphasis to the plan. For, while a well-contrived plan may cover the defects of an ill-chosen theme, on the other hand a heterogeneous, scattering and confusing plan will seem to break the unity of the most perfect theme. Anything in the plan discordant with the theme is, of course, a fault. Any conflict or contradiction between different elements of the plan is a manifest fault. But it is not so generally recognized that mere distraction is a fault, without any reference to the inherent merit of that which distracts. In fact, the more thrilling or beautiful the distraction is, the worse fault it is. The tendency to distraction is everywhere, and the speaker or writer who heedlessly introduces a distracting thought or image into his plan is himself helping this tendency, and actually inviting his readers or hearers to divert their interest from his chosen theme,—which should be the controlling theme. He must have the moral courage severely to cut down or cut out what is good and beautiful, if it leads away from the main theme and plan. That is his sacrifice to unity.

A plan of which every part agrees with and supports every other has a sustained and satisfying onward movement like that of the express train in which every stroke

of the piston meets harmonious response from every part of the mechanism, and even the dead weight of the moving mass helps to give it stability on the track and assured direction of progress.

2. *Exclusion.*—By this is meant that under each division of the plan shall be treated only what applies to that division, so that every division shall be complete by and for itself and "exclude" every item of every other division. If one part of an idea is treated under one division of the plan, and another part of that same idea under another division, there is the dulling effect of apparent repetition; but, far worse than that is the effect of confusion, as of a tangled skein, which would be useful if only each thread could be made to run clear of all the rest. Exclusion is simply the principle of Unity applied to each separate division of the plan. Each must handle its own material, carry its own weight and no more. None must infringe upon any other.

3. *Sequence.*—The items of the plan should be arranged in an order which the mind can naturally and readily follow. Sometimes the very first order that occurs to the speaker or writer is the best, because it is according to the natural laws of association of thought. When a vast mountain is the chief feature in a landscape, the thought of every beholder is drawn first to that commanding height. Hence, any description which begins with the mountain will seem natural to any hearer or reader. So Coleridge begins his "Hymn Before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouny":

> "Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star
> In his steep course? So long he seems to pause
> On thy bald, awful head, O sovran Blanc!"

Afterward he can speak of the torrents, the "silent sea of pines," the glaciers, and even the mountain flow-

ers. The laws of association connect cause and effect. But the connection may be made either way. When Crusoe saw the footprint on the sand, his thought leaped instantly from the effect to its cause,—an intruding human presence. But when the trailer on the plains is scanning the sands, it is because he is confident of a cause in the flight of a fugitive, and seeks the effect in a footprint. Likeness is a ground of association, but so, alas, is contrast. The mind turns readily from black to white, swiftly appreciating sharp opposition.

Any thought not in some line of natural sequence mars the whole scheme. It does not agree with what precedes, and hence comes in with jarring or disturbing effect. The instant mental question is, What is this doing here? It does not lead up to that which follows, and thus slows up the whole movement of thought. The hearer or reader can not go on until he has got by that misplaced thought, or got rid of it. Yet that inconsequent idea may be excellent and useful. It may legitimately pertain to the subject, and so be no violation of unity. If it can be transferred to a point where it naturally connects with what will there precede and follow it, the seemingly intrusive idea may vindicate itself as useful and important, and may help on the whole movement of the discourse.

However attained, that is a good plan over which, when once presented, a normal mind can progress with readiness and ease. The test of a plan is like the test of a coat. Does it fit when made?

4. *Proportion.*—This means that the different elements of the plan should be given an importance in presentation suited to their actual importance in the development of the theme. An element that stands out as absolutely vital must have accumulated upon it all that can be of

impressiveness. The less important matter should be minimized in the treatment.

The most obvious way of doing this is by assignment of *time or space* to each topic in proportion to its importance. The inexperienced speaker or writer often takes some subordinate topic of his plan in due course, becomes interested in it, follows out its various suggestions, supplies illustrations, until he suddenly becomes aware that his time and space are limited, and the really vital matters, yet to follow, must be despatched as best they can be by summary execution. Sometimes an interesting novel comes to such inglorious finish. You have followed the various characters with admiring or pathetic interest, till in the final chapter you can almost hear the author saying, "This thing must be wound up here and now," and the personages come up for prosperity, glorification, or slaughter, as if a charge of cavalry had been let loose upon the *dramatis personæ*. Again, a preacher becomes so absorbed in portraying the harmful effects and enslaving power of evil habits, that he finds his half-hour almost expired, and can only add some hurried suggestions of possibility of recovery and reform, which are cold and weak by contrast with what has gone before. Even an experienced speaker may fall into this snare in extemporaneous discourse. His own ardor and eloquence lure him on, till he sees the jump of conclusion springing into view before him.

Hurry sometimes must be. Some of the very best speaking or writing ever done is doing in driving haste, where the exigency and the speed stimulate to utmost intensity and vigor. But somewhere and somehow behind the rush there must be forced in a plan, noting the most and the least important things with resolute apportionment of time or space, and that plan must control

the whole discourse, as his schedule controls all along the line the engineer of the express train. But where time for deliberate study can be given, most valuable results may be attained by apportioning and reapportioning the time or space to be allowed to each item of the discourse.

Another element of proportion is *force*. There is a statement that says on one subject the utmost that can be said. If we say of Machiavelli, for instance, "He was the most ingenious, ruthless, and unscrupulous politician that the world ever saw," that may be an overstatement of fact, but it reaches the limit of comprehensiveness, for that statement can not well be surpassed. So there are words that reach the limit of intensity or power:—*Ecstasy, rapture, perfection, conquest, victory, calamity, disaster, destruction, ruin, enraptured, overjoyed, desolate, woful, majestic, awful, august, sublime,* and many another. A brief passage pervaded by such absolute statement and by such intensity and force of language may eclipse a much longer passage expressed in quiet and unemphatic style. Thus a just proportion of the various divisions of a plan may be in part secured by a wise adjustment of relative force, and not merely by length or brevity. How force may be gained for a whole composition by the deliberate weakening of certain portions is well shown by Professor Barrett Wendell.

"The truth is that in written style, as well as in declamation, there is at any moment a fairly distinct limit to the power of any given man. You can shout just so loud and no louder; you can be just so passionate, just so funny, just so pathetic, and not a bit more. . . . There are moments, of course, that call for your utmost power; but these are rare. And your utmost strength should be reserved for them. . . . There is no mere technical device for strengthening

style, then, more apt to be of value than the deliberate weakening of passages you have written in your very strongest way. Such deliberate weakening of all but the very rare passages which really demand your utmost power results at once in a connotation directly opposite to that of vocal or written rant. It is evident in such cases that there is power in reserve. . . . The tact by which style may be kept strong enough to connote no weakness, and weak enough to connote indefinite strength, is perhaps the finest trick of the writer's trade.*

Thus a statement may be made true and sufficient for the purpose by saying very much less than might be stated. Instead of saying, "Overwhelming financial disaster brought the enterprise to inevitable and hopeless ruin," it may be quite enough to say, "Financial reverses compelled the discontinuance of the enterprise." From that milder statement there is possible an indefinite increase of force for some other passage where greater force may be required. It is ill to speak or write always at the top of one's power. If the most strenuous statements and the most exalted, pathetic, or tremendous words are resolutely kept out of the less important passages, they may come in with utmost impressiveness in passages that are meant to convey the greatest power. So a painter by deepening the shadows and subduing the tints in some parts of his picture causes the light to beam forth where he will with a brightness otherwise unattainable. Severe restraint in many parts of a discourse makes possible exceeding power in others where the orator or author would exert his utmost force. Such due proportion at once of space and force will give a composition or discourse that noble and shapely completeness which we admire as Symmetry.

5. *Climax.*—The books treat Climax as a "figure of

* Barrett Wendell: "English Composition," Ch. vii, p. 270.

speech," chiefly in connection with the sentence or, sometimes, the paragraph. But it is by no means desirable that every sentence, still less every paragraph, should be climactic. Such a style would be as oppressive as the company of the man or woman who is always posing, assuming attitudes, and uttering epigrams. Excessive use of climax in sentence and paragraph not only seems artificial, but concentrates attention unduly upon these minor features of composition. But for every total of literary production, the rule is almost, if not absolutely, invariable, that every argument, discussion, oration, poem, or narrative, should be climactic. This is almost a necessary consequence of the laws of thought. When the strongest thing has been said, why go on? Any addition then at once says to the hearer or reader that that strongest thing is not strong enough. He sees that in your view it needs buttressing. But you have nothing stronger with which to support it. Whatever you now add must be weaker. You have foregone the advantage of a strong position in order to make a stand upon a less defensible one. This is a pitiable reversal of sound literary strategy. Then, since the capacity of human memory is limited, and still more limited the capacity of sustained impression, the chief care of orator or author must be the final impression, which the hearer or reader infallibly carries away.

Out of the items of the plan the very strongest thing must be chosen for the finish. Then those that lead up to it must be arranged in an ascending order so that the latest thing said at any point shall never be weaker, but always stronger, than that which went before. These must never be a step down or backward, but always ascending and advancing. The speaker who can maintain this steady increase of interest holds an audience

in the hollow of his hand; the writer who can maintain it may be sure that the reader will follow on and on till the last word is read.

The climactic power of proportion by force may often and well supersede proportion by space and time. When, for instance, the early part of a discourse has laid, by extended treatment, the foundations of belief, one brief paragraph of concentrated force may be the one thing needed to rush the mind to swift and sure conclusion.

In any oration or treatise that aims at that greatest of all practical results, the influencing of man to action, the plan must take account of the three great elements of the human mind, the intellect, the emotions, and the will. The will is never moved without some emotion. You have not stirred a man to action as long as he says, "This is doubtless true, but I don't care." He must be made to *care* by some influence upon the emotions. The thought must be impressed upon the intellect as true, then it must enlist the feelings and sympathies, after which it is a short step to lead the will to act on what the intellect believes and the heart desires. The strongest emotional appeal should be at the climactic close. Nothing must follow to chill its glow; and it must be remembered, that, since emotion is essentially transitory, it will cool upon the very anvil, if it is hammered too long.

### The Title

The title is the name or form under which the speaker or writer chooses to present his subject for first consideration. At times the subject to be treated is so clear-cut a proposition as to be itself the theme, and to be also the very best title. But, as a rule, the title is chosen for some supposed element of attractiveness, and may

only very distantly, or even not at all, intimate the theme. The "Iliad" evidently has some reference to the siege of Troy, and the "Æneid" to the story of Æneas; "Paradise Lost" carries the very central thought of the poem; "Marmion" means nothing until one has read the story. The title of most novels, as "Ivanhoe," "Guy Mannering," "Rob Roy," "David Copperfield," "Martin Chuzzlewit," "Oliver Twist," give little or no clue to the purpose and character of the works they name. If a work is good, it will make its way under any title; if it is not, no title can give it life and power. Where a title can be found that will give an adequate key to the work, there is a distinct advantage, as the hearer or reader feels at every step and at the end the satisfaction of *quid pro quo,* the receiving an expected equivalent for his expenditure of attention and of time. Still the thought of Dr. Johnson's utterance controls, that the fate of a book is decided "not by what is written about it, but by what is written in it." If another man shall arise who can write plays equal to Shakespeare's, he may give them titles as colorless as "The Tempest," "Macbeth," or "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark," and the world will be well content.

Certain publishers secure a collection of pictures illustrating great catastrophes by fire, flood, cyclone, volcano, and earthquake. An author is requested to write an introduction to the volume. Where can unity be found in such a mixture? The effect of fire is the very opposite of that of flood; the cyclone is a convulsion of the air, and the earthquake a shaking of the ground. At first, unity seems hopeless, but suddenly you see that all these agencies have destroyed cities and homes and lives. There is the point of resemblance. They are alike in

their effect upon humanity. Hence you may have the theme, "Elemental Disasters in Their Effect Upon Man." This theme has unity, so that you can work upon it, and combine these various elemental agencies of destruction in a single treatment as regards man, who may be the victim of their fury.

But this theme would never do for a title, because it is heavy in statement and repellant in tone. People are not attracted to a chapter of "disasters." What title can we get that will be briefer and more attractive? Suppose we say, "Nature's War Upon Man." This is brief in statement, true to the theme, and at the same time has the wild charm that always attaches to a story of battle. On that we can build somewhat as follows:

We talk boastfully of man's conquest of Nature, and his triumphs, indeed, are wonderful. But it is not all triumph. There are defeats and reverses in this age-long war, and Nature from time to time breaks out in fierce reprisal.

We dwell on the surface of a little globe that is whirled like a grain of dust through the infinite spaces, held by the invisible thread of the sun's attraction from whirling off into the outer darkness, and by the unknown primal impulse of planetary motion from dropping into the globe of fire. We move and build on a thin crust spread over a seething furnace, everywhere but a little way beneath our feet. From time to time the hidden fires force mountains of molten rock forth from the volcano, or the earthcrust shivers and wrinkles and topples down our cities as the planet cools; seas and rivers slightly change their level and floods overwhelm our habitation; or warring winds from north and south whirl past in the fury of conflict, and man himself and his proudest works are borne like feathers on the blast; or the sea of oxygen in which we live suddenly begins to combine on a mighty scale with the carbon of which all our structures are built, and we are in a sea of flame, and where one day were proud marts of trade and miles of peaceful homes, the next there is a blackened waste.

But through all these catastrophes comes out triumphant the soul of man. There is enforced recognition of human brotherhood when rich and poor are involved in one community of disaster. Those who escape will toil in weariness and pain and heartache to rescue and relieve the injured; far-off cities rush in their relief trains; physicians, with the brave humanity of science, come from distant homes to labor all unpaid till heart and hand fail in generous devotion to the needs of suffering fellow-men. Then, when all is done, the smitten host rise up heart to heart and shoulder to shoulder, rebuild their city, fence out river and ocean by mightier walls, put steel and stone in place of wood, and conquer prosperity again.

Out of the vastness of disaster shines forth the glory of man's spiritual nature, superior to all the blind world of matter, and proving the deep truth of Pascal's saying:

"Man is the feeblest thing in nature. . . . But though the universe should arm itself against him, man is still greater than that which destroys him, for he knows that he dies, while of the power which it has over him the universe knows not anything." And out of wreck and rain come those grand traits of human courage, endurance, generosity, and compassion, that are more than life and stronger than death, and that point to a yet nobler immortal life.

See how much has come out of the mixture of incongruous items of a single subject, when out of that subject you have evolved the unity of a controlling theme.

As to special details of the Plan:

(1) *The Introduction* is for the sake of the audience, —to awaken interest in the topic, so as to enable the reader or hearer to start fairly with you. This is what the books of rhetoric mean by "conciliating" the audience. Not that it is ever to be assumed that an audience is hostile, but that it is desirable to seek at the start some common ground—some point of possible present agreement. Sometimes the introduction may state the subject of the discourse; sometimes, as in telling a story, that is

held in reserve till the close, the introduction merely saying enough to make the reader or hearer desire to know the rest. In any case, the purpose of the introduction is somehow to awaken an interest in what is to come. Often the very best introduction consists in beginning squarely with what one has to say. Why not? Hearers or readers are ready to enter upon the subject, or they would not have come to the audience-room or taken up the book. Let them have at once what they have come for. Stronger than all his carefully wrought introductions is Cicero's plunge into attack in the fourth Catilinarian oration, "How long then, O Catiline, dost thou abuse our patience?"—in which he doubtless uttered the instinctive resentment of all loyal senators at the effrontery of the conspirator in taking his seat among them. The short story is apt to start in the midst of some scene, only afterward, perhaps, giving a clue to what had happened before. There are other occasions when a special introductory utterance is needed to bring the minds of those addressed into a ready accord with the main thought the speaker or writer would present. All introduction beyond this is futile, and a hindrance, however beautiful.

(2) *Objections* that must be noticed should be deftly sandwiched in. As an almost invariable rule, objections should not appear either in the introduction or in the conclusion: not in the introduction, lest you start with antagonism; not in the conclusion, lest you leave the objection as the last impression on the reader's or hearer's mind, so that his final thought is, "There's a great deal to be said on the other side after all." This leaves the speaker or writer on the defensive at the end, instead of triumphant.

Unless you can answer an objection conclusively, do

not mention it. Your omission of it may be thought to be because you do not consider it of consequence, but your failure to answer it when mentioned is confession of defeat. Very likely those you address have never heard of the objection, and may never think of it. Do not plunge them into difficulty from which you can not help them out. Thus the present writer heard a prominent preacher begin a sermon on the temptations of the devil with an objection to the very existence of a personal devil; the objection was stronger than anything in the preacher's reply, and coming at the very beginning of the discourse left all the rest in shadow. That objection is the only thing I remember of that sermon,—the one thing I can never forget.

Start well with your subject; develop your thought on some point of power and interest; then,—if necessary—mention that some persons have made certain objections, which you will now incidentally brush aside. Get the difficulties out of the way. You have disposed of all that. Then go on with something positive, and come to the concentrated power of your conclusion.

(3) *The Conclusion.*—This has often been treated as a necessary appendix to be added to a discourse after all has been said. But a detached conclusion is a blemish and a deformity. At some time a formal conclusion strengthens a discourse by giving it definite final direction. An argument may be reenforced by a vigorous summary of its main points as a conclusion, sweeping the substance of all that has been said in swift review at the final moment. There are occasions when bringing all the preceding utterance into direct connection with some matter of time, place, or personality may focus the thought upon something of deep interest to hearers or readers;—though often, if they are simply left with the

main thought, they may be trusted to make more effective application of it by and for themselves than anything the speaker or writer might add would lead them to.

Often and often there is nothing better than to end with the strongest thing you have to say; the one chief thought you wish to impress growing naturally out of all that has been said before, so that the whole discourse is masked behind the clear, shining climax, which is your conclusion. When circumstances permit, the very best conclusion is simply to stop at the height of achievement.

### The Complete Expression

This is the filling up and rounding out of every feature of the plan, to give it force, effect, and beauty in the appreciation of the readers or hearers.

The one theme has been found and clearly defined. Its elements have been drawn out in the lines and branches of the orderly plan. Now, in the complete expression, all that is in the theme and plan is to be put in finished, effective, and attractive form.

This shaping of all the material into Complete Expression is called, in the books of rhetoric, *Amplification*. The idea is that the plan is a condensed composition, and that the final utterance is but amplification of the plan. While this is always theoretically true, it may at times be far from the actual fact. A vigorous mind may be almost swamped by its own rush of thought. Intense interest may accumulate material far beyond what time or space will permit one to use, so that the so-called amplification is in fact abridgment. Yet if the abridgment is good, it will be according to a plan, which can be abstracted from the mass and definitely stated in con-

secutive items, the complete expression being then the amplification of that abstract.

In the complete expression, illustration, ornament, emotional suggestion or appeal may find place. Here the speaker or writer comes into personal touch with those he addresses, every word designed to go direct from him to them.

The amplification must be as much in harmony with the theme as is the plan itself, and must have the unity of the theme, every finishing touch bringing out more perfectly the central controlling thought. It is as when in the opening spring the strong branches and feathery twigs of the tree, that form its substantial unity of structure, (the plan of the tree) burst out with leaves, blossoms, and fruit from the inherent power of life pervading all the perfect organism. Amplification reaches out into the universe of thought, and draws in every idea and every image that may be fitly gathered within that field along those lines.

Now the element of exclusion in the plan becomes helpful. The author takes each subordinate topic for the moment as if there were no other. All he has to say on that division of the plan, he will, within his prescribed limits of place and time, say then and there. Inventive art is working now along narrower lines. Within those limits he may deal with that single topic independently with all freedom and fulness, as nature perfectly finishes every petal that joins to make the rose.

It was my privilege many years ago to see that great painting, Church's "Heart of the Andes." It was a large canvas, filling the center of one side of a great room. Each visitor was provided with an opera glass for better view. At first one did not seem to need the

glass. There were the giant mountains. On the left were snow-capped peaks rising far into the sunny heaven, the fleecy clouds flitting midway about their giant forms. On the right were other peaks of less elevation, grim, rugged masses of rock, dark in the fury of a thunder-storm. You could see that they were distant many a mile,—far away, under another sky. Between them stretched lower hills, forests, and forest glades, while far back in the center of the landscape shone the blue waters of a quiet lake. You could just distinguish the groves and scattered trees along its shores, and on the farther side could note a group of white specks, which you knew to be the houses of a village. In the foreground were dense masses of forest, and in the very center a sunlit space full of bright tropical flowers.

When eye and mind had taken in all the scene, we turned upon it the magnifying-glass, when all increased in grandeur and beauty. Every separate crag, every jutting rock of the mountains came out clearly into view; we could distinguish the crowns of the individual trees that made up the mass of the forest; the houses of the far village and the white church with its clock-tower stood out in clear contour; and we could trace every petal of the bright flowers that seemed to lie at our very feet in the foreground.

The artist had first swept the whole scene with a master's vision, and sketched out the mountain masses and all other great features in grand relief and just proportion. That comprehensive sketch answered to the author's or orator's plan of his entire discourse or treatise. Then he had treated with loving care each feature of the vast landscape, devoting himself for the time to that single scene as if it were an independent

picture, and as if that scene were all, bringing out the rocks and crags on the mountain-side, the individual trees that signalized themselves in the forest, and each flower of nature's bright garden that filled the foreground. Each minor scene was perfected as if it were all, yet its relation to the total was never lost, but each was more by association or contrast with all else that made the picture. The mountain lake was more placid by contrast with the thunder-smitten crags, the luxuriant forests were brighter with fulness of life, and the flowers of the plain more delicately beautiful because of the icy peaks rising into eternal cold and silence beyond.

Only by a like comprehensive perfection does the artist of speech become truly master of his art.

## CHAPTER XIX

## CONSTRUCTIVE LITERARY WORK

To apply the principles of inventive art in speaking and writing to the actual performance—to turn theory into achievement—is the problem that besets, and often dismays, the inexperienced speaker or writer; and from its difficulties even the accomplished orator or author never wholly shakes himself free. Beyond all knowledge of how the thing may be done is the practical ability to do it, so that words shall be spoken worthy the attention of a listening audience, or an effective writing finished under one's hand. We need what the Romans expressed by *res gestæ*, "things done," and the French by *fait accompli*, "accomplished fact." By what means may such actual result be attained?

Here is a ream of paper, a pencil or pen, and a writer. How is an essay, a poem, a book, to be made out of that combination? It can be done. It has been done. Sir Walter Raleigh, while a prisoner in the Tower of London, wrote his "History of the World;" Bunyan, in Bedford jail, his "Pilgrim's Progress;" Milton, in blindness, his "Paradise Lost;" Scott dictated some of his novels while suffering such excruciating pain that he kept the doors of his study closed, lest his irrepressible cries should disturb those without. If there is thought and opportunity, that thought can be written down in readable words. Or, again, here is a man and an assembly waiting for him to address them. How shall he speak words that may hold their interested attention?

Such are the problems presented in literary construction, for oratory, so far as it is premeditated, is a form of literary work. If it lives beyond its immediate occasion and effect, it lives only as literature. The orations of Demosthenes and Cicero are but a form of literature to the modern world. That the best work may be done, there must be some method of construction for a writing or a speech as truly as for a building. What shall that method be?

### I. The Subject or Theme

In the first place, there must be a subject. Sometimes this is supplied by those who demand the work—publishers, a society, a college, an audience; sometimes by an occasion, as the Landing of the Pilgrims, the Birthday of Washington or of Lincoln; often it is left to the free choice of the speaker or writer himself. From his subject, however obtained, he must then derive a theme which shall be his own. How is that to be secured?

There are times, indeed, of no perplexity. Some truth or belief has long been shaping itself in thought. The life of the thinker has woven itself around it. All the occurrences of the outer world have seemed to illustrate it. When he would speak or write upon it, thoughts crowd thick upon him. The only question is, how he shall marshal them. Sometimes the plan also springs full-formed into the mind. The author sees, as down a forest vista, what shall be the opening thought, what shall follow in effective order, and what shall be the climax of conclusion. Then he has only to be "obedient to the heavenly vision," seize the cloud-shapes before they dissolve or fade, and put them into permanent form to impress the minds of other men. It was such sudden awakening and marshaling of thought that the ancients

spoke of as the "divine frenzy" of the poet, and depicted under the figure of the "Muse," bringing to him from Olympian heights his inspiration.

These times of vision are glorious. In such crowding upon the mind of the gathered thought and feeling of months or years, some of the greatest work the speaker or writer can ever do will be performed. It was thus in Webster's Reply to Hayne, for which he had had no opportunity to prepare. All the studies of years as to the constitution of our federal government, all the long-cherished enthusiasm for the sacredness of the Union came rushing into his mind, eager and in haste for expression. He himself said of it, "The air around me seemed to be full of arguments; I had only to reach up and pull down a thunderbolt and hurl it at him."

But such times of vision are rare, even for the masters of oratory or of literature. One who waits for them will do but desultory and fragmentary work. The world's great enterprises are not to be conducted by sudden bursts, even of transcendent eloquence. One who will work only under the impetus of hurrying vision will spend a large part of his life as a literary Micawber, "waiting for something to turn up." His course will be like that of a tropical river, most of the year flowing in a feeble and sluggish stream amid barren sands, useless by its weakness,—then, in times of freshet, a raging torrent, too often useless by its violence.

One who would have enduring power in the world must do steady continuous constructive work, not always as he would, but as he can. This is the kind of service most useful and most esteemed in the ordinary course of life. Such work demands steady and resolute industry for the author or the orator, as much as for the carpenter. Dr. Parker, the great London preacher, tells

how he thus labored year after year, going resolutely into his study at the appointed time, and beginning to work at what seemed to him a fitting text, which often at first offered no suggestion, with the resolve, "This text *shall* yield me a sermon." He did not always reach the supreme heights of eloquence, but such solid work always yielded some worthy result,—something to make it worth while for an audience to come, something to pay them for coming. A vigorous mind, by resolute thinking, with the infinite universe to draw upon, can find a theme suited to any occasion that may arise. It is told of Frederick the Great of Prussia, who loved eccentric exertions of despotism, that at one time, when seeking a court chaplain, he made it a condition that every candidate for the office should preach only upon a subject given him after he entered the pulpit. One Sunday the minister was allowed to go through all the opening services without a suggestion, and only at the last moment when he must rise to preach, an orderly stepped up, and handed him a sealed envelope. The envelope contained only a blank sheet of paper. After scrutinizing it to be sure there was no hidden mark, the preacher stepped forward and held the paper up before his audience, saying, "My brethren, here is *nothing;* and," turning the sheet over, "there is *nothing;*—and out of *Nothing* God made all things." Then he began a powerful sermon on the Creation. He had brought absolute vacuity into relation with the creative power of the Lord God Omnipotent.

The theme once chosen, what shall be the next step? Many books and teachers answer, to make an abstract —form a plan. This is theoretically a sound and excellent rule. But in practise an abstract or analysis is often the most baffling of all things. Why? Because, to

abstract there must be something to be abstracted; to make an analysis there must be something to be analyzed. Often the very elemental ideas of which a plan might be built do not yet exist in the speaker's or writer's mind. Hence, to meet the needs of a vast number, we would take up next, not the plan, but:

## II. The Gathering of Material

If a subject seems barren and empty, so that you do not see how any one could write upon it, that is because you do not know enough about it. Then the first thing to do is *to gather material.* Any subject can be made interesting if you know enough about it, and know how to tell it. The present author heard at one time a very pleasing lecture upon table-knives; but it was from an expert in their manufacture.

Suppose you are called upon for an address or an essay on a subject as to which you can form no definite plan, because you have yet no adequate knowledge. The exigencies of life do make such demands. Then start in with the drag-net method.

(1) Get a blank-book or a bound pad of suitable size. Have nothing to do with loose sheets, which are liable to be scattered or lost. Be sure that you are going to keep all together, and all ready on demand, the items you are to gather with painstaking care. If you foresee much material to collect, your book or pad may be one of a set, of uniform size, which you can number 1, 2, 3, etc. A vest-pocket memorandum-book will be a useful auxiliary for such items as may occur to you when absent from your desk.

This is to be your omnium gatherum—a convenient receptacle for material of every kind awaiting classifica-

tion at a future time. You are emancipated from all bondage of order or system. You are starting out for a raid upon the universe, to gather supplies wherever you can find them. You do not yet know which will prove to be the most important. You need not pause to know while gathering, but thrust all into your receptacle, to be assorted afterward according to their value or connection.

(2) To start your collection, write down all you already know about the subject; also all you think or imagine about it. This is important, because it is your own. Much of it may be very crude or very worthless, but it is genuine for you. Even if you afterward reject it, you will be the better off for having sifted your own thoughts, and found out what you do not want. Matters of which you are in doubt should be noted with a very conspicuous question mark, which printers call a "query." On a subject such as we have supposed, where you have little information to start with, this record of your original thought will not take much time or space.

(3) Find what books there are to read on that subject. Make careful memoranda of all the best, or all that your time and circumstances will make it possible for you to read, with the full title of each work and the names of author and publishers. This is work of far-reaching and enduring utility. One of the most important forms of knowledge for every student is of the sources from which knowledge may be obtained. You can rarely hope to gain it all at once, but you have learned the path, and can at any time go back, and fill your cup at the same spring. Always when possible consult the actual book, rather than a quotation from it, or what someone has written about it. In doing this you will be sure to get

more than you go for, and will be better prepared to go again.

(4) Begin reading with the first good book you can get hold of. You will lose time, chill your enthusiasm, and get the dawdling habit, if you will not read anything till you can get the very best. The most important thing is to set your own mind fairly at work. Do something. In the vivid language of the street, "Get a move on." Begin to read some book, even while you are waiting to get the very best one.

(5) If the book is your own, mark important passages freely; write the moment's comment in the margin. Those instantaneous suggestions will be some of the best you will ever get. You may toil in vain to reach the same afterward by dull and cold reflection. Moreover, you can find anything you want in that marked book as fast as you can turn the pages. At all specially interesting or important points make notes in your note-book, with a few key-words and reference to volume and page —just to blaze your track, so that you can go back over it again when you will. Do not try to write a laborious abstract of every paragraph you read, as some old books recommend. That process would take the life out of a sensational novel. Read fast,—fast enough to get interested, and catch the movement and scope of the author's thought. Then, when you have run through a portion so, go back over it, while all is still fresh in your mind, and make your notes on that portion. Then start on another stretch of reading, and so move forward by stages till you have finished the book, or so much of it as you have use for. If the book is a library book, which you cannot mark, make more careful notes of the passages you care for, with reference to volume and page.

Preferably, if you can, copy out important passages in full at once.

(6) Write, during your reading, everything that occurs to you that's not in the book. This is the most important matter you will have, because it is your own, and not the author's. So you may combine original thought with study. If you agree with the author for some reason which he has not stated, write that. If you differ with him, write that, and *why;* put your objections in shape. Make them clear to yourself. If you doubt anything the author states, write a query, with a big question mark, so that you may look up that matter later.

Sometimes, when in haste, write a few vigorous words to preserve the idea. But when some thought is clear and vivid to you, write it down in the very words that come at the instant. Those are likely to be the most live, apt, and vigorous you will ever reach on that thought. At that moment the idea is new-born, and the expression is alive. Any after-statement will be manufactured.

In all this preliminary gathering, do not bother about the order. Put your ideas and discoveries in just as you catch them, as a fisherman puts fishes in a creel, so that they shall not slip away while you are after more.

(7) Review your gathered material from time to time. —Refresh your memory. Size up the matter already obtained. What you see to be of chief importance mark with vertical line in the margin of your note-book; and you may vary the degrees of importance by using now one line, now two, and again three for the very highest. As you find answers to your queries, strike out the question mark, or write out the answer, referring to author, volume, and page where found. If you use

clippings, make a memorandum of any one you care to quote in connection with the topic to which it applies.

(8) Trust much to unconscious cerebration, or what is often called the subconscious mind. There is a mystery here, but it is a fact that a thought once started in the mind, if let entirely alone, will, after some hours or days—perhaps after a night's rest—be found to have gained clearness and power. Somehow all you have ever thought or known gathers round that idea once committed to the mind. The most unthought-of things illustrate it. The most opposite things have one side to match it, or else shed light upon it by negation or contrast. The slumbering idea is like money in a savings bank, gathering interest while you work or sleep, so that you take out more than you put in.

Not only does the mind unconsciously think things through, but it carries on a constant process of unconscious selection, associating ideas in groups, so that relations are seen which were not at first perceived. Thus at any moment in your gathering of material the plan may develop itself out of the mixed mass. The material begins to divide itself off in strata. You see what is most important, what is subsidiary, and what is negligible. You grasp at least a partial order of thoughts, which you can mark off as one, two, three, etc. From that moment your gathering of materials will be more systematic. You know where to bestow new material, along which lines to work, what most needs following up, what is worthy of most labor.

(9) Cease Gathering.—You carry on this gathering process until,

(*a*) You have gathered all you know how to collect, or all that you see that you can profitably use. That is for you—at present—all there is. Then the sooner

you write the better, before the matter gets cold and your interest dies;—or

(*b*) Until the time comes when you must write, in order to get the work done, if not as you would, yet as you can.

For one reason or the other, either from choice or necessity, you have reached the end of your gathering time. Now determine your plan. Look over your material, and decide what is the very chief thing which you want most to impress upon your hearers or readers. That should come at, or very near your conclusion. Everything else must lead up to that, establish that.

Now the order of propositions almost settles itself. You have only to lay out the road for reaching an ascertained goal. Which propositions lead up to others? Which naturally follow from others? Let these come into your composition in the natural order of thought.

Select these out of your notes, with the natural subdivisions that you will find there, and, fast as you use them for your plan, mark them out of your notes, with a plain stroke that will cancel, but not obliterate, as you may wish to glance at them again. Then run back over the mass, and see if there is anything yet unmarked that is still desirable and available now. You will probably find many good things that you must pass by, either because you have not room for them, or because they would lead off from the main subject, and break the current of thought.

By this time you have a tentative plan, which may, however, require some readjustment. We are profoundly skeptical of the perfect plans given in the books with I, II, III; 1, 2, 3; (1), (2), (3); (a), (b), (c), etc. We obstinately believe that the entire work grew first, and that this neatly articulated skeleton was

afterward dissected out. The average person will reach an orderly and connected plan only by much review and reconsideration. To secure such readjustment of plan as will commonly be found desirable, one obvious method is to write the *theme* at the head of a sheet, and then to write under it, in the best order you can at first see, the various *heads* of the *plan* contemplated. Write each heading in the fewest possible words that will give the gist of the thought. You can compare them, not only more swiftly, but more surely, if each is a brief, swift suggestion, rather than an extended statement. Then it is easy to note any rearrangement that may seem desirable, and to recopy the whole scheme when complete.

In the readjustment watch to see whether any item includes another or any part of another, and, if so, unite or closely combine those which belong together. If one item depends upon some other, connect them so that the true relation will be shown. Also study whether any more clear, forcible, and effective form of statement can be found for each topic than that at first suggested.

The method just sketched has been used time out of mind, and found practical and efficient, though somewhat laborious. Now rhetoric has adopted the modern device of the "card index," and found it very useful and helpful. Of this Professor Wendell says:

"In my teaching I have found one purely mechanical device of much value here. Whatever our object, whatever kind of writing we undertake, and on whatever scale, our work must inevitably divide itself into certain separate parts. . . . What shall these parts be? is the question; in what order shall they be arranged? The simplest way I have found of answering these questions is this: On separate slips of paper—cards, if they be at hand—I write down the separate headings that occur to me, in what seems to me the natural

order. Then, when my little pack of cards is complete—I study them and sort them almost as deliberately as I should a hand at whist; and it has very rarely been my experience to find that a shift of arrangement will not decidedly improve the original order. . . . A few minutes' shuffling of these little cards has often revealed to me more than I should have learned by hours of unaided pondering." *

If this latter method is adopted, it will probably be found desirable to copy the entire plan, in the form finally decided upon, on a single sheet or series of sheets, so that all may be brought swiftly and connectedly under the eye, and be viewed as a whole, yet with due recognition of its various subdivisions. Any method is good by which this purpose is accomplished. Incidentally, it is well to note briefly the space and emphasis to be assigned to each topic, as well as you can judge in advance.

The theme has been chosen, the plan systematized. Now comes the work of expressing in full what the plan has but sketched in outline. It is as when the frame of a building has been set up, but there still remains the task of enclosing it with roof and sides, and placing windows and doors affording light and communication for the sake of those who are to occupy it, and whatever may be of ornament for those who are to look upon it. Without this enclosing, the frame might stand empty and useless till it fell in ruin.

That enclosing is now your job. Your plan tells you where you are to start, whither you are going, and how to get there. You do not have to deliberate about all that. Your gathered material is ready at your hand to draw upon. Now, what shall you do?

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* "English Composition," Ch. v, p. 164.

1. *Start.*—Begin with the first item of your plan. Do not bother about a prefatory "introduction" to be put in place of what you want to say. If a preface should prove to be desirable, you can write it after the main work is done, as Cicero wrote all his introductions. The question now is, what have you to say under the first division of your plan, and how are you to say it?

Begin writing on that somehow. Even if not your best, if not what the subject deserves, even if you should ultimately discard it, this initiatory writing will have its use. There is a mental, as there is a physical, inertia, which is only broken by action, and the act of writing is action. To that extent the mind is stirred, and like a moving body, it rapidly becomes capable of increasing velocity. The preliminary canter of the race-horse gets him nowhere, but it does put his muscles in responsive condition for the race. Then, too, words crystallize thought. They become material entities outside the mind. That which has floated in a nebulous haze in the mental spaces is made to take concrete form. If the written words seem feeble and cold, they often react as a spur to the mind. You challenge yourself with the question, "Is *that* the best I can do on such a subject? Is that all it means to me?" Then the mind bestirs itself in response, and rouses its latent energies. So the whole discourse will be better for the writing that may go into the waste-basket. You have begun. You are alive,—at work.

2. *Make the Start Interesting.*—Some of the books will tell you to make it pleasing. But this is too narrow a rule. For many occasions, it is indeed, important to please at the outset. There are other occasions when pleasing is not a consideration. We have had too much of "Smile into the telephone." It is far more important

to speak distinctly. The "cheerful idiot" has been promoted to the high places, and his demeanor has been aped by those capable of better things. At times a smile is simply exasperating,—when we want a deed and get a smirk. Earnestness is often worth infinitely more than cheerfulness.

When a financial panic holds the nation in its grip, bringing disaster and suffering into every home, pleasing words are but empty and irritating platitudes. When some pressing matter of public interest, as of peace or war, is calling for decision, no one wants to be amused or cajoled. When the news of Lincoln's death had been just received, no oration or writing on that event had any space for pleasing. The key of utterance then was rather the opening of David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan:

"The beauty of Israel is slain upon our high places. How are the mighty fallen!"

But things that have no element of pleasing are vividly interesting when they meet the immediate demand. A sense of the situation, a prevision of popular demand, will tell the speaker or writer what is fitting, and what is fitting will always be interesting. Often the most surely interesting thing to begin with is that thing which you yourself most want to say first.

3. *Keep the Assigned Proportion of Space as Nearly as Practicable.*—In your plan you have settled approximately how much you can allow to each topic. If the opening thought grows upon you, and many ideas or illustrations occur to you far in excess of the allotted space, cut out the excess, however good. Nothing is better for any speech or writing than a crowding of thoughts beyond the spoken or written words. By those unuttered

thoughts the actual utterance gains the effect of reserved power—the suggestive style.

Yet this decreed proportion of space can be but approximate. We do not credit any human being with anticipatory omniscience that can lay out the future beyond contingency. For a thirty-minute paper you know that you cannot allow a ten-minute introduction. You have assigned three minutes. But that opening portion grows upon you. You see an apt and telling illustration that will extend it to five minutes. It may then be well to give that needed expansion, if the rest of the work will possibly permit. If in the advance of your work it becomes clear that certain sections require for adequate development more space than at first assigned, you may sometimes do well to omit some whole section which is good, but not essential, so that those you retain may have their full and adequate power. In the complete expression you are nearer to each topic than in your preliminary plan. Your concentration on that item has made you understand it better, and see more clearly its relations, so that the complete expression often reacts upon the plan with helpful change. Thus no writing is done until it is finished. The very plan must be held flexible enough to be modified, if need be, in the final expression.

4. *Regulate the Proportion of Force.*—If you put your utmost power of expression into your opening, you have destroyed the possibility of progress and climax, for beyond your utmost you cannot rise. In fact you are sure to fall below it. The schoolboy springs upon the platform with a shout,

"Aye, tear her tattered ensign down!"—

and so rushes through the poem, and when he reaches

the climax, he has no more force to add. He has not so much as at first, for he is tired now. So he finishes in a breathless gasp,

> "Nail to the mast her holy flag!
> Set every threadbare sail,
> And give her to the god of storms,
> The lightning and the gale!"

No mind can endure indefinitely the strain of its own utmost exertion. Weariness will make it flag, and the decline comes where advance is needed most.

If, indeed, as sometimes happens, your opening utterance or some later portion comes upon you with an exuberant rush of thought and eager words, you may do well to let it have its way. Enthusiasm is precious and we may do ill to chill it with a wet blanket of precaution. Later, in the revision, you may tone it down so much as may be needed. Or, you may find, on the contrary, that the opening paragraphs, when you were struggling to break somehow into your subject, are cold and dull, and you may need to electrify them by the touch of what you now feel to be the true power of your theme. Harmony is best found in final review of all.

5. *Treat Each Topic as a Little Theme.*—For your immediate purpose it stands alone. It must have a unity of its own, and a definite relation of its own to some interest of those addressed. It must have also the rhetorical merit of exclusion,—to include all that is to be said on that topic and to exclude everything else. Limit your horizon for the moment to the topic in hand. Some item that is to be considered later might add vividness to your opening. But if you use it there, you have killed it. If you take it up later, it will seem an old story. If you really want that thought later, cut it reso-

lutely out of your opening. So with every subsequent item.

Yet, while perfecting this division for itself, the author must see, with constantly recurrent glance, the relation of this subordinate portion to all that has gone before and to all that is to follow. The whole production is to be essentially one.

6. *Power and Limit of the Paragraph.*—We are in the age of the apotheosis of the paragraph. It is found exceedingly convenient in school exercises, since it can ordinarily be written within half an hour, and corrected in much less time, besides being a very effectual check upon the loquacity that often mars longer compositions. Also, the "independent paragraph" is favored by many newspapers, as arresting the attention of those who will read only by snatches. Then logic comes in, and tells us that the paragraph is made up of sentences, and the entire composition is made up of paragraphs, the inference being that you may construct sentence after sentence till the paragraph is attained, then paragraph after paragraph until the entire composition is done.

The tendency of this teaching is to concentrate undue attention upon fractional units of composition. In writings constructed on this system, you will find many a beautiful paragraph, almost or quite a gem by itself, but set into the writing like a piece of choice inlaid work in an elegant table, while the body of the discourse seems but like the plain wood which binds these insertions together. The best work can not be so done.

As well argue that a building is made of brick or stone, and you have only to lay one brick or stone on another till you reach the top, when your building is done. No architect is a mere bricklayer. He sees the building whole before the very foundation is laid, and each brick

or stone is but an incident in the completion of his comprehensive scheme. We do not believe that any masterpiece of literature or any speech or writing that has deeply moved the souls of men was ever constructed by piecing paragraphs together. In a stirring production like Macaulay's essay on Milton, the impetus of the whole composition so sweeps through the paragraph that one is scarcely aware of it as a separate entity, and only finds it such upon careful rereading.

Completeness can seldom be attained in a paragraph that forms part of a continuous discourse; nor is it often desirable, because the connected paragraph should look forward and backward, keeping the reader or hearer interested in what has already been said, and in what is yet to come. But the connected paragraph should have a completeness of its own—the completeness of one link of a chain, able to join with and sustain all that precedes and all that follows, while also able to sustain fully its own part of the weight. Within itself the same general laws hold for the paragraph as for the whole composition. It must be governed by one prevailing thought, and it must so far complete that thought that no other paragraph shall need to return over that topic; but its completeness is not within and for itself. It is part of the forward movement of the whole discourse, but its range of view is shorter. The bicyclist rushing at speed, or the horseman riding at a gallop, catches, indeed, the far vista of the landscape, but closely notes at each instant only a space about twenty feet ahead. That is the paragraph.

7. *Seek the Glow of Composition.*—One who has a fitly chosen theme and a well-defined plan, will find in the complete expression that the work grows under his hand. You are nearer to it now. Your attention is more

minutely concentrated on each successive item, as you take it up in turn. You are seeing it, not in far perspective, but with a shorter focus, as a matter of present interest by and for itself. Your thoughts become more vivid as you express them in concrete form. Our words react upon ourselves, so that one can make himself angry or considerate by the form of utterance in which he expresses his emotion. As your attention is closely fixed upon one unit you see more clearly what it involves. You think of illustrations to be used, of difficulties to be avoided or met, of contrasts and relations before unperceived. You have set in action the mighty law of association of thought. We all know how much association can do to hinder. A story or a joke that will not go out of the mind, a tune played by a hand-organ on the street, may for a time disorder one's finest thinking. It is for the writer to turn the laws of association into a mighty and beneficent ministry. You begin to see rapidly and instinctively other thoughts that naturally join with the one immediately under consideration. Often suggestions that you can not use instantly, but may avail yourself of later, so crowd upon the mind that the writer needs, as Quintilian said long ago, to keep loose sheets of paper close to his hand, to note with flying abruptness these visiting fairies of reason and fancy, sometimes writing merely a few key-words that may act as a charm to call them back when he has time to entertain them, and make for them a permanent home of fitting phrase. At one moment the sweep of association will flash upon you a simile that will explain more clearly what you would express, and perhaps be also for its own sake a thing of beauty. Again comes a vivid metaphor that will impress the thought more deeply. At another moment a sharp contrast appears, giving

the vigor of antithesis. Yet again one feels by anticipation such harmony of view with hearers or readers that he can turn a statement into a question, "Do you believe this?" "Would you do that?" evoking the conclusion from the minds of those addressed, instead of urging it upon them as his own. Sometimes the development of thought will be by drawing out from the general statement a particular instance which the reader or hearer may more fully apprehend, and in which his feelings may be more deeply interested, and with this the adding of descriptive details, by which what was a mere fact becomes a vivid picture. All the devices of rhetoric become instinctive with the writer when his subject possesses him, and he concentrates all the powers of his mind upon its fullest and best expression.

In such expression use at every point the very best thought you have. Do not try to save it over as too good for the occasion. If you do that, the choice thought will be like the manna of the Israelites, which spoiled if they tried to keep it over night, while if they trustfully used it, they would find on the coming day the whole face of the wilderness covered with new material like morning dew. There is always something better to be said than has yet been uttered. Using the best thought you have up to this moment puts the mind in condition to reach out for more and better. The very vacuum you create will suck in fresh supplies from all the waiting universe.

8. *Provide Transitions.*—Advance of thought involves change. As you pass from point to point, sometimes even from sentence to sentence or from paragraph to paragraph, shall those changes be unheralded? Often they may well be. Hearers and readers have more capacity of memory and swift inference than those who address

them give them credit for. And they love the exercise of their wits in keeping up with a vigorous style, even when at times abrupt. But a break that is rude and harsh, and that seems aimless, is a blemish to style. Some well-devised phrase, sentence, or paragraph, looking back and pointing on, may often save a style from jerkiness and rudeness without in the least impairing its vigor. But in the process of writing one should not worry too much about getting from one point to another. The main thing is to get on. The new forward step is clear to you, and you are eager to advance. Go forward. That fervor of thought may be deadened beyond recovery while you are constructing an elegant approach to it. Trust to your own knowledge that there is connection, and express the thought while it is vivid and clear. Then, at more leisure, you may express the connection.

9. *Revise for Perfection.*—That revision is important need not be urged. Rarely, indeed, is anything so well said or written that the author himself can not better it by attentive review. The point to be made here is that revision should be depended on for all final approach toward perfection. The best writing is never done under a microscope. Progress is not made by the car that must be constantly stopped for repairs. In your original draft you will constantly seek to use the best and most fitting words. You will often struggle to catch some word or phrase of which you are dimly aware, but which seems to be eluding you. That is helpful. But suppose, as has already been suggested, it still eludes you, and you must search dictionaries, or books of synonyms to find it. That is asking too much. The thought you have in mind will be growing cold, while you are capturing a word by which to express it. Do not stay for it. Put some warning mark over or

under the inadequate word you now think of, and go on. Or you see that you need to verify a fact, a name or a date. But to do that you must search an encyclopedia, or even go to the library. Meanwhile the thoughts that are crowding upon you now will have faded from consciousness, and you may even start some inharmonious or misleading lines of association. The finest thoughts are commonly the most ethereal, and will vanish into thin air while the author is painfully hammering out some prosaic verification of items. That verifying can wait. Set up a warning signal by a mark in the margin, and put your soul into the thought to be expressed now.

Again, it is beyond doubt that you should make every sentence clear and correct, and you find you have achieved one that is awkward. Very well. There is but one question: Can the idea you want be found in that deformed sentence? If so, check that sentence in the margin for correction of form, and move forward to the next. The rules of grammar will be the same to-morrow or next week, and you can then hew and pulverize and reconstruct that sentence at pleasure. Just now get the next thing said. Or, still again you see that some comparison might be more beautifully expressed, and beauty is worth study. Adornment is important. But it is more important to have something to adorn. If you make the essentials of your thought strong and clear in your first writing, you can carve and polish the ornaments at pleasure in your revision. In constructive work depend upon revision to bear its own part of the burden.

Revision is best effected after an interval—long enough to enable the mind to return with fresh outlook—not long enough to allow suggestions to be chilled and outlines to fade. The lapse of twenty-four hours is a good

and frequently available interval. Of course, actual conditions may defeat the ideal. Much newspaper work is printed without even rereading. Revision itself must often be hurried. Still the ideal holds, that where one may expect reasonable opportunity to revise, the original composition should concern itself chiefly with substance of thought, while subordinate matters of correctness and many graces of style may be trusted to thoughtful revision.

Is the method above sketched offered as the one infallible system by which any one can produce able and successful work at will, and without which he can not produce it at all? By no means. On the contrary, nothing is more notable than the strong individuality of all foremost orators and authors. Let any gifted literary worker detail his method, and probably the first remark made by any other of the craft will be, "That would not do for me," or "I never could work in that way." One has gathered his material from the unstudied experiences of life, so that his very theme is evolved from his waiting, heaped-up stores. Another trusts, and can safely trust, to the development of his plan from point to point, as his work advances—though this is rare. Such a writer would say that his plan "comes to him," by some sure instinct, which he has never defined, but which is for him sufficient. So, in numberless ways will be found something in the individual that does not take kindly to an alien scheme. No rhetorical teacher ever made an author or an orator of a pupil who was not potentially one already.

What then? Is all instruction, are all schemes useless? All the mechanics of the world could not have made Edison. Yet Edison is using every hour mechanical laws and methods wrought out by men who could

not do his work. These have become so truly "second nature" to him that he avails himself of them without a conscious thought. In substance the rhetorical scheme is one for all the world's literary workers. A theme there must be, whether evolved from the material, or chosen antecedently to all collection of data. Material there must be, whether accumulated by the toils and the very accidents of life, or patiently elaborated for the special occasion. A plan must be formed, whether evolved laboriously or almost unconsciously, if the work is to have any consistency and coherence. The complete expression must conform to certain laws of expression, or be a failure:—not because those laws make the expression, but because they have been found to control the best of all that man has done by voice or pen. Ordinarily one will move most freely and effectively according to his own individual bent who knows the laws that have aided others, and the places where he must not step off. The theme, the plan, the gathered material, and the essential laws governing the complete expression will be the very means of setting his own individuality free, and of enabling him in his own way to do his own very best. No one is so little the slave of rules and laws as the one who has thoroughly mastered them.

## CHAPTER XX

## LIFE THE SUPREME ACHIEVEMENT

Beyond invention, beyond accumulated information, beyond constructive method, beyond all that art can do, remains one requirement surpassing all. There may be found many an oration, many a piece of literature so elegant, so perfectly fashioned according to all rhetorical rules, that it is referred to as a model of style, while yet it does not take hold, and never has taken hold, of the heart of man, but stands in cold statuesque beauty on library shelves, visited only by the researchful scholar. What ails a thing so fine? It has almost every excellence. It has the very appearance of life. Yes, but it has not life:—and for the want of life nothing can compensate.

As you read any mere "plan" of discourse, however perfect, you can not escape the feeling that it is dry and dead. It is well called a "skeleton." The skeleton holds important place and does indispensable service in the human organism, but all our direct interest in it is when it is not only covered by the rounded form, but animated by the energy and the eager activity of life.

In the ancient prophetic vision, the seer prophesied to the dry bones in the valley of slaughter with wonderful effect. There was "a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone"—perfected skeletons. There was even a fuller result; "the sinews and the flesh came

up upon them, and the skin covered them above,"—the complete expression of the forms of life,—"but there was no breath in them." Then came the message, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." In response to that summons, "the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Were it but possible for us now so to arouse some dead rhetorical perfection into life!

But no miracle-working power is given us. All the skill of our boasted modern science can not build a tree. We could fashion one in perfect outward semblance from the rounded trunk through the arching branches to the tiniest twig. We could cover it with so fine an imitation of bark, leaves, and even blossoms or fruit, that the unaided eye could not detect the difference. We could set it up so that it would stand proudly in its appointed place. But, after all, it would be but a statue of a tree, an elegantly fashioned and carven post. The showers and sunshine of spring, the heat of summer, could not call out one leafy spray from its perfectly fashioned boughs. It lacks that incommunicable, ineffable, and transcendent force, which we call LIFE.

Life can not be put upon any structure from the outside. You can not take a cold literary product after it is made, and say, "Now I will give it life." If the work is not already instinct with life, in vain will you attempt to vivify it by piling upon its cold surface resounding adjectives, vigorous phrases, exquisite similes, and metaphors of power. The essential deadness of the thing itself will wither all your superimposed accessories of energy and vigor. Still more hopeless is the attempt, into which untrained writers are often betrayed, to impart a semblance of life by typographical devices of

italics, capitals, and exclamation-points. Where an exclamation-point may be properly used, the sentence would exclaim without it. Neither can you make an organism alive by vivifying a single member. Your electricity may make the dead frog's leg twitch, but the moment you shut off the current the poor batrachian is as dead as before. If you have constructed a rhetorical masterpiece without the glow of life, you can not rouse a pulse in the body of your work by bursting with furious intensity into your conclusion.

Life, if real, must pervade an entire organism. The life of the tree must be in the delicate white rootlets hidden in the soil; it must stir in the substance of the solid wood beneath the bark of trunk and branch and bough; and must flow with constant current from cell to cell of every topmost leaf. Nothing less than this must be the ideal of every one who would worthily speak or write. The life of a speech or a writing must pervade it all from beginning to end. Any sentence or any word not imbued with that controlling life needs to be stricken out. Whatever is really worth speaking or writing fulfils Milton's description:

> "For spirits that live throughout,
> Vital in every part, . . .
> Can not but by annihilating die." *

There is a power that can do in human utterance what is so grandly wrought in all nature by the elemental forces. It is the power of the living interest of the speaker or writer in what he would say to men. If that thought is worth speaking of to any one, if it is worth writing down in permanent form, it should interest him-

* "Paradise Lost," Bk. vi, l. 345.

self. If it does not interest him, how can he expect it shall interest any one else? If it does stir his mind and heart, his interest should increase from beginning to conclusion. At every step he knows more about his subject. He sees more of its connections and associations. The very labor he has bestowed upon it gives it value, as we cherish what we have toiled for. His only question comes to be how he can make others appreciate the beauty, worth, and power which his subject has come to possess for him. Not a word or sentence must fail to carry some touch of that moving impulse that possesses him. All will have the thrill of that comprehensive life.

Life may pervade the briefest utterance, as when Anthony Wayne said to his soldiers, mustering for the assault on Stony Point,

"Men, if I fall, step over me, and go into the fort!"

Then, when he did fall, but found himself still alive, shouted,

"Men, take me up and carry me into the fort! I will die at the head of my column!"

Life may pervade the most extended work, as the stately and sustained march of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," or Burke's "Impeachment of Warren Hastings," or his "Conciliation with the American Colonies," or Webster's sustained argument for the supremacy and perpetuity of the Federal Union, in his "Reply to Hayne," Lincoln's Inaugurals,—the First with its comprehensive sweep of argument and intent,—the Second with its prophetic fervor of purpose nearing fulfilment. Life appears in Coleridge's poem, the "Ancient Mariner," never more shudderingly alive than on the ship of the dead; it moves in Byron's "Childe Harold," without unity and almost without

plan, yet never without some deep sympathy with human hardship, sorrow, or misfortune pulsing through all its sad, fierce, or melancholy lines. There is life in Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," in Mark Twain's and Bret Harte's extravagances, and in everything that on any side or in any form has taken hold upon the lives and souls of men.

This does not mean that every speech should be a philippic, every poem or essay a vehement outburst of passion. The heat of white-hot steel is not less intense than that of blazing and crackling twigs. The power of the sunshine is as real as that of the thunderstorm, and far more beneficent. A quiet speech may thrill with an intense earnestness that will move every heart. A scientific treatise may carry in every sentence the impress of the still intensity of the author's devotion to his study. Darwin's "Origin of Species" stirred nations, and can still be read with interest to-day, as we follow the great thinker through his patient experiments, everywhere animated by his earnest purpose.

There may be parts of any production that can not be made vigorous or brilliant. For instance, a certain explanation must be given. You can not make it seem entrancing or exalting, but you can make it seem germane to the subject. That is an element of interest. You can make it concise. That shows that you are eagerly hastening on to something you care more for. There enters the interest of expectancy. There may be statistics which it is essential to introduce, and statistics will kill a speech or writing if anything can. But one interested in his subject and eager for its effect will select his statistics. He can give them proportion and symmetry. Then, because a living soul has assimilated them, the dead numerals and digits become alive, as the inanimate matter of

the food we eat braces the living muscles, throbs in the pulses, gives color to the cheek and light to the eye. The author's own deep interest in the thought he would present can give to every item of his speech or writing the pulse of life.

Another vital element is his interest in his readers or hearers—what we may call the vision of the audience. As he advances in his work, he becomes ever increasingly near to them, and they become more and more an invisible but manifest and expectant presence. The more clearly he can make himself aware of their needs, sympathize with their feelings, views, and wishes, care to interest, guide, or help them, the better will be his product, as it answers to the thrill of a life beyond his own.

Such interest in the thought, and in those to whom he would appeal will, if genuine and earnest, affect every part of any speech or writing. It will be anticipatory, seeking from the outset to lead those addressed onward to the perception and acceptance of the author's thought. It will be pervading, watching at every moment to bring out the thought with due power at each stage of progress, cutting out any word, sentence, or paragraph, however attractive, that would hinder the one great movement, filling any blank where the hearer's or reader's interest might be checked or chilled, choosing so far as possible the very word nobler, more forcible, more gentle, more tender, or more perspicuous that may best convey his treasure of thought to the minds and souls of men. It will be cumulative, that which has already been said or written pressing on toward the conclusion, as an ocean-wave heaves itself shoreward.

Where a theme has been wisely chosen, a plan skilfully framed, and the complete expression well adapted to theme and plan, and where such human interest thrills

through all as a living power, the work so produced, if on an ordinary subject and on the general level of thought, will be attractive and useful; or, if it deals worthily with that which is itself grand and commanding, such a work may take its place among the masterpieces of human achievement, and exert a world-wide influence parallel with the march of time.

THE END

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